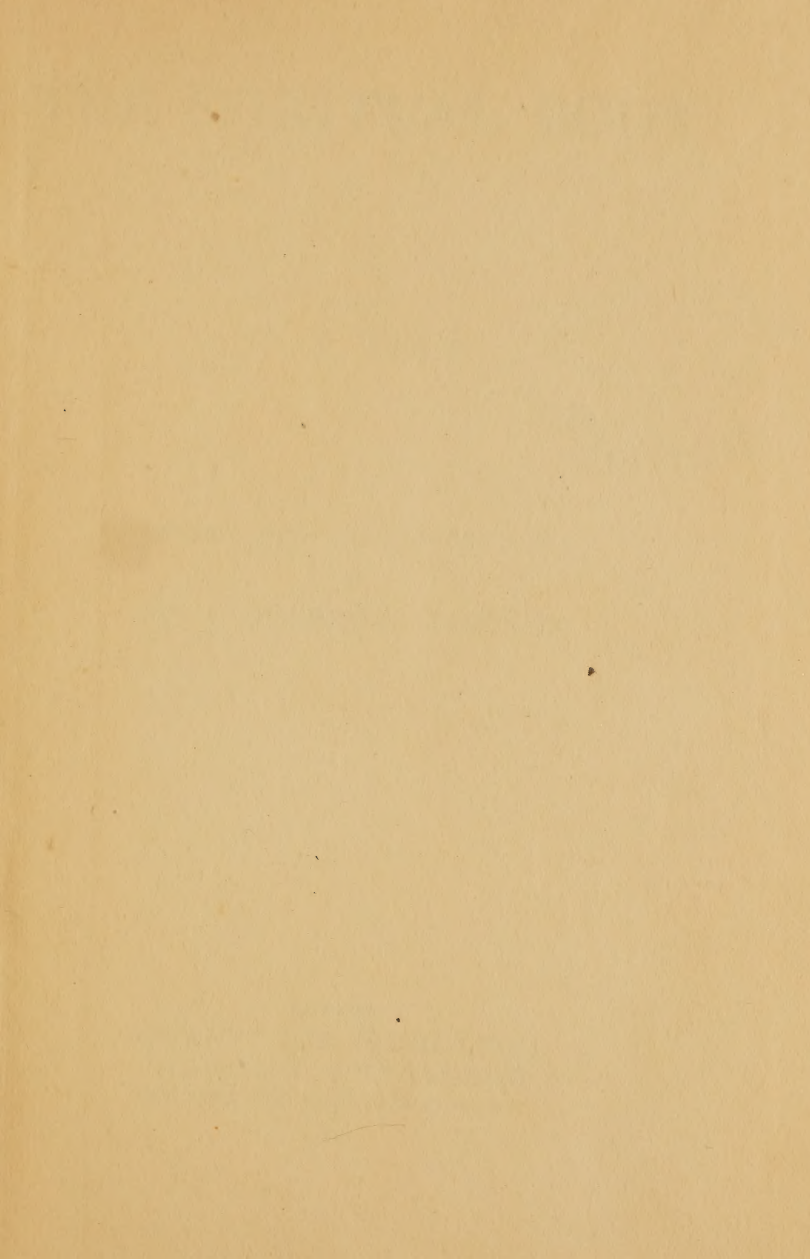


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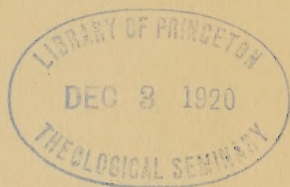






# THE SPIRITUAL BODY

BY  
C. E. ROLT



EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

W. J. SPARROW SIMPSON

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*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

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**DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE**

**ON THE DIVINE NAMES AND  
THE MYSTICAL THEOLOGY**

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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THE MS. of this Essay on the Spiritual Body was sent after its author's death to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. The Society decided that it should be published, and entrusted me with the task of editing it. It will of course be understood that the Society in no way commits itself to the theories here propounded, which are in fact of a highly speculative character. The Essay is to be regarded simply as a thesis for discussion, the reflections of an independent thinker of unusual philosophic power, on one of the difficult problems of Christian eschatology.

It will be evident to any reader, whatever estimate he may form of its arguments, that this is an Essay upon which its author spent great pains. The subject had been in his mind for years. It was indeed in process of revision when he passed from speculation on the nature of the spiritual body to an experimental knowledge of the same.

Two opposite tendencies will be noticed as

the reader proceeds. The writer's veneration for the traditional Faith makes him in some respects distinctly conservative: yet at times his deviations from the accepted view, as for instance in regarding Lazarus as being not dead but only in a trance, are startlingly conspicuous. But if the Essay is taken as a whole the conservative tendency predominates over the liberal.

Of the author's work as a student I have been permitted to speak elsewhere in an introduction to his translation of St. Dionysius the Areopagite (S.P.C.K. 1920). The present Essay shows that philosophic speculation was his strength, and that he excelled in this direction more than in biblical exposition. He was in warm sympathy with the spiritualist movements of the day, anxious to recognize true elements contained in them, and desirous of presenting the doctrine of the Resurrection Body in a form likely to win the assent of the modern mind. His discussion is pervaded throughout by a deeply devout and reverential spirit.

The reader will remember that the Essay labours under the disadvantages which are inevitable in works published without the author's supervision. No introduction had been written. No headings were assigned to the chapters.



No title had been selected for the book. The Editor has been obliged therefore to do the best he could to supply these various omissions.

Quite briefly, the Essay is designed to show that the natural body and the spiritual body are intimately related; that the human spirit will never be bodiless; and that body will exist in three successive states, the body of this present life on earth, the body of the intermediate condition before the Resurrection, and the body as the perfect expression of spirit in the life of Heaven. It is maintained that the germs of the intermediate body and of the spiritual body are already contained within the natural body. But these three successive stages are not so entirely successive that they cannot be in part simultaneous. Thus it is argued in Chapter I. that St. Paul's conception of the Resurrection Body was partly derived from his own experience of a period when he could not accurately define whether he was in the body (that is the present natural body) or out of it (that is in the body of the intermediate state). This opinion is illustrated by the expression of Jacob Boehme.

In the second chapter this theory is applied

to the human body of Christ. The walking on the sea is considered as an instance of levitation parallel to that recorded of St. Francis and others. The Transfiguration is similarly viewed as an anticipation of the higher stage of the body's development: a manifestation of the intermediate body during the natural life.

Conversely the Resurrection appearances of Christ are regarded as materializations; reference being made to the psychical report of Sir William Crooks; and to the modern conception of matter as ultimately reducible to force. "Raymond" and Psychical Research are introduced as throwing light on the Empty Tomb. The author is anxious to contend that the Empty Tomb was not simply evidential but an actual transition from the natural to the intermediate condition of the human body.

Chapter III. is a discussion on the nature of physical death. It is maintained that Christ, if He had so willed it, could have been exempt from dying; and that upon His Death the Body abandoned by the spirit gravitated naturally to the invisible. There was an intermediate body of Christ.

In Chapter IV. the various post-Resurrection appearances of our Lord are subjected to

a critical analysis. It is maintained that they form a graduated series in which visibility and tangibility are increasingly eliminated in proportion to the individual recipient's spiritual penetration and faith. The Author sees in this principle the explanation of the fact that no visible appearance of Christ after Resurrection is recorded as having been granted to His Blessed Mother. She was able to dispense with evidential aid which others needed.

To this discussion the Author has appended two other chapters: one of them, Chapter V., being a criticism of the miracle of the raising of the dead. It will be noticed that at this point the Author breaks away from the conservative tendencies which have on the whole marked his treatment of Scripture hitherto and adopts a conspicuously modernist idea. His explanation of the case of Eutychus is not quite clear. He says, "probably, then, St. Luke thought Eutychus was actually dead before he was revived by St. Paul." Yet he goes on to say, "if, however (which seems most likely), St. Luke believed the boy had been only stunned," etc. But the Author propounds the view that Christ's own words show that the daughter of Jairus was not dead but only

sleeping ; and more startling yet that the Raising of Lazarus was a case of coma ; and that our Lord is " obliged for the time being to tolerate and even encourage misconceptions if He cannot without them convey the essential part of His teaching." Thus our Lord said, " Lazarus is dead," although this was not a scientific truth.

The function assigned to the Editor is rather to explain than to criticize. It may, however, be within his province to observe that, apart from any question of the gravity and actual validity of these opinions, the main thesis of the Essay is independent of the contents of this chapter, and may be viewed as hardly strengthened by them.

The final chapter contains a discussion on the mystical Body of Christ and on the Eucharistic Body. Here it is maintained that spiritual body is not affected by spatial distance ; and that consecration does not affect the material stuff composing the Bread and Wine. There is further some criticism on the gross materialism of the mediæval view of Body.

It should be noted that the Author originally reversed the order of the last two chapters. As they now stand they are placed as his



matured reflection designed. It may still be doubted whether the Author's first order is not the right one.

The reader will not omit to note that the Author, in his chapter on the Appearances of the Risen Christ, takes for granted that Mary Magdalene was the sister of Martha and Lazarus, and makes his analysis of the Magdalene's character largely dependent upon this identification. It is of course, however, an assumption which many critics would regard as at least precarious.

It should further be observed that the Author was very much under the influence of Wendt, whose book on the Teaching of Jesus happened to be one of the few critical treatises to which attention was given at the time of writing. But it is questionable whether the Author quite appreciated Wendt's curious limitations.

If a personal note may be permitted, the Editor had many conversations with the Author on the subject of this Essay; and it may be right to say that it was written partly as a correction of various statements in the Editor's book on the Resurrection and Modern Thought.

W. J. S. S.



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# THE SPIRITUAL BODY

## CHAPTER I

### ST. PAUL'S TEACHING

THE doctrine of the spiritual body probably resembles the other articles of the Christian faith in this important respect, that it like them is no mere speculation but the result of a personal experience. What is the doctrine? and what is the spiritual experience from which it arose? These two questions are closely connected together and the answer to the one will throw much light upon the other. Let us begin by trying to discover what the doctrine is.

The passage to which we naturally turn is in the 15th Chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. St. Paul is there expounding the hope of the Resurrection and he bases it upon the difference between the natural and the spiritual body. The body of flesh which is laid in the tomb is the natural body, and that which

shall rise again is the spiritual one. To make his meaning clear St. Paul uses a simile from husbandry. The grain of corn, he says, is sown in the ground as the natural body is laid in the grave, and the plant with its manifold powers springs forth from it at last as the spiritual body shall arise in due time. Let us consider the analogy and see what it implies.

In a grain of corn, or any other seed, there is concealed within the husk a germ from which the plant will grow. The germ is, in fact, the centre or the starting-point of the developing life which is there latent from the first, concealed by the husk which surrounds it. If then St. Paul intended the analogy to be pressed (and his argument seems to require that it should) it follows that the spiritual body is from the first in a dormant and undeveloped state within the natural body of the flesh. And thus our flesh together with the animal powers by which it is permeated, is but an outward husk concealing, cramping, and yet to some extent protecting and fostering the latent spiritual body within.

If this is the meaning of St. Paul's teaching it appears very probable that it springs from a

personal experience. Let us see what this experience was.

In the 12th Chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians the Apostle attempts to describe it. About fourteen years before the time of writing (that is to say in 43 or 44 A.D.) he had a wonderful experience in which his spiritual consciousness had for the time been so enlarged that he hardly seemed to be the same individual ; and in speaking of that which he in this state of rapture became, he speaks of himself as having been changed almost into a different person. The experience is beyond human utterance, but the important point to notice for the present purpose is a phrase repeated twice over in almost the same words. He says he does not know whether he was in the body or out of the body at that time. He is straining thought and language to express something that is too great for speech. In one sense he felt he was in the body, in another sense he felt he was outside it. That was the strange paradox. In that moment of ecstatic vision the spiritual body, which had grown strong within its sheltering prison, broke loose for a time and performed its spiritual functions unhampered by the grosser body of the flesh.

And thus he was both within the body and without it at the same instant. He was within the spiritual body which with its ethereal movements was a perfect vehicle of his ecstatic experience, and he was outside the natural body which for that short time of rapture had almost been cast off.

Thus St. Paul knew by experience that there is a spiritual body. As to the nature of this body he seems at first to have formed no theory, yet as years passed his experience could not but work within his mind and help him when in answer to the questioning of the Corinthians he first expounded the Doctrine of a Spiritual Body. Another element which bore a supreme part in forming this conception within the Apostle's mind was no doubt the glorified form of the risen Lord which appeared to him at his conversion. Something he saw and heard in that great crisis of his life which convinced him that the Lord was living in a bodily yet spiritual state. This happened probably nine years before the experience just alluded to, and on it St. Paul based his belief in a bodily resurrection of the Christian.

In the earliest of St. Paul's epistles the matter has not yet been very clearly thought



out. He, with all other Christians, was expecting the almost immediate return of Christ ; and to this hope he alludes of course in the 4th Chapter of the First Thessalonians. He is content to say that the dead shall rise without giving any theory to explain how this is possible. Then, he says, those who yet remain alive on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. In some way their bodily nature is to be spiritualized, but he does not tell his readers how. He may have already formed a theory on the subject, but if so, he does not feel the need of explaining it at the time. The only matter of importance is that Christ will appear in a glorified condition which is obviously in some sense a bodily one, and that the believers shall be changed into a corresponding state and shall with glorified spiritual bodies leave all earthly things behind. St. Paul believed that our Lord would so appear because He had actually appeared to himself in a glorified spiritual body. And he believed that the believer would be changed into a similar condition of spiritual, yet bodily, existence partly because of that Appearance vouchsafed him by our Lord, but partly also because of that strange experience which he had passed

through nine years after\* when he was caught into paradise and heard unspeakable words.

Echoes of the same experience can perhaps be caught in the Epistle to the Romans where the adoption for which the Christian longs, is described as the redemption of the body. Still we find the strong conviction that the body itself shall be set free and glorified into a spiritual state ; though we have not even yet a definite theory expressed as to the manner in which this shall be. At last in the First Epistle to the Corinthians the need of instructing others compels the Apostle to formulate more clearly his own belief. And thus we get the definite doctrine of the distinction between the natural and the spiritual body. Then in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, written a short time after this, there is a statement of the Christian's hope which seems to imply such a distinction (2 Cor. v. 1, 2, 3). It may be a mere accident or it may be more ; certainly this passage suggests a more definite theory than the language in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians. There St. Paul had been content to say that the believers would be caught up in the air to be with Christ, and he seems in fact to suggest that the material

\* The MS. reading "before" must be a slip for "after."

body shall itself be thus transformed ; here he suggests that the material body shall be, in a sense, destroyed so completely that death shall be swallowed up in life. He contrasts the spiritual dwelling prepared for him in heaven with the material or fleshly dwelling which he possesses on this earth. And the argument seems largely to turn on the fact that death apparently strips our body off us while the Resurrection clothes us in a more glorious form. We shall not possess a material body of flesh ; for, as he says elsewhere, " flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven," and losing the fleshly body is like the casting off of a garment. Yet he tells us we shall not be naked or unclothed, for we shall possess a spiritual garment now prepared for us in heaven. We shall in fact be out of the flesh, yet in the spiritual body. And thus will be at last perfectly fulfilled that experience of which the Apostle had a foretaste when he could not say whether he was in the body or outside it. And just as then his true self broke through the limits of time and space and formed its own true essence on a higher plane above this limited world so that he afterwards spoke of himself as if he was on that higher plane another person, so is the true

essence of our spiritual bodies awaiting us in heaven, while yet the germ is now within us awaiting the hour of its release.

Whether St. Paul had come precisely to the belief that the material particles of the flesh were left behind for ever to mingle with the dust it is not easy to say. Possibly he still thought that they would in some manner be spiritualized in the hour of the Resurrection. The matter is of no great moment. What is important is the fact that St. Paul distinguished between the material body and the spiritual, and regarded this latter as existing within us now in the germ, and that he derived the doctrine which he formulated apparently from a personal experience of his own. The distinction between the material flesh and the real body underlies the argument of a difficult passage (1 Cor. vi. 12th verse onwards). It will be well to consider this passage somewhat in detail. Two of the questions with which St. Paul had on this occasion to deal were concerned with impurity and with attendance at pagan feasts. Many converts from paganism would regard these two questions as being of equal importance and standing on the same spiritual level. In fact, so degraded was the moral level

in much of the pagan world, and on the other hand so high the importance attached to the symbolism of eating, that many would regard the taking of food sacrificed to the idols as involving a guilt equal to that involved in the sins of the flesh. This fact is illustrated by the decree of the council at Jerusalem which in the same sentence commanded the believers to abstain from fornication and also from things strangled and from blood. :

These two questions, then, were at the same time submitted to St. Paul for his decision with but little sense of the enormous difference between them. Now the question of eating food sacrificed to idols St. Paul regards as a mere matter of expediency, and this is the answer which he gives at the beginning of Chapter viii. and also in Chapter x. To eat such food is not a sin and yet is inadvisable. "All things are lawful unto me but all things are not expedient. All things are lawful unto me but all things edify not" (Chapter xv. 23). The other question, on the contrary, is no mere matter of expediency but one of fundamental morality; and this St. Paul explains in Chapter v. 13, onwards.

The difficulty of the passage arises from the



fact that St. Paul, with that quick abruptness of thought which is characteristic of him, anticipates in verse 12 an objection which he foresees. He is dealing with a pair of problems and is shortly going to apply to one of them the solution that all things are lawful but all things are not expedient ; and he foresees at the outset that an objection may be drawn from what he is later going to say on this question to what he is now on the point of saying on the other one. Such an anticipation of a possible objection, before it has entered the mind of those whom he is addressing, is in keeping with his impetuous style. So it is, for instance, that in the 10th Chapter of the Romans he is led on from the thought of salvation being given to all through the name of Christ to a defence of his own position as an apostle, and an allusion to his own work and calling, which carries him for a time away from the path of the argument he is following. So it is in the 6th Chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. The quickness of his thought has as it were run on ahead, and hence the difficulty of the passage. The verses we are considering may be paraphrased as follows :—

Of the two questions you put before me one is a matter of expediency, as I shall be



explaining later on. There is no sinfulness in eating food sacrificed to idols, but at the same time I should not allow myself, if I were in your place, to become a slave to social conventions, where any harm might come of them. Still it is quite true that food is a material thing building up our material flesh, and is not, as such, a matter directly affecting our spiritual state. In the next world we shall have no material bodies and shall need no material food, and therefore this is not a matter of fundamental morality. ("Meats for the belly and the belly for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them.") But the other question is very different, it is one that affects not the mere material flesh, but the fundamental nature of the body; and it is because impurity affects the body and not merely the flesh that it is a sinful thing. It affects that spiritual body which God will raise up (verse 14), that spiritual body which is a member of Christ (verse 15), and a temple of the Holy Ghost (verse 19).

The argument thus appears to throw much light on what St. Paul meant by the *body*. The flesh and all fleshly things shall be destroyed (verse 13), the body, on the other hand, shall be raised up, and is for the present in some way

within the flesh permeating it and acting through it for good or ill. Thus it is plain that our spiritual bodies are latent in us now, within that flesh which, in the other world, shall have been brought to nothing and superseded.

This is in harmony with the teaching of our Lord Himself. The food we eat cannot, as such (He tells us), defile our spirit. That which is merely physical will finally pass away. On the other hand man is destined, if he attains to his high calling, for a Resurrection State in which he shall be like the angels. And in the angelic body which will then be his he will have left behind his physical material nature, and have drawn from his physical life on earth, and from the human relationships it has brought him, the elements which, gradually built into his being, have prepared him for that heavenly life. He will now live in a glorified transcendent state in which all physical conditions shall be left far behind.

It was suggested above that the teaching of St. Paul on this matter was based on a personal experience. And no doubt abundant illustration could be collected from many of those Christian saints in whom the power of the Holy Spirit developed to an unusual degree some

latent psychic faculty. There is an interesting passage in St. Macarius of Egypt which seems to have its roots in some such power of perception. According to him the soul, and apparently the spirit, is itself composed of a fine and subtle material substance. He seems to hold that a spiritual being does not merely possess a spiritual body but actually is such a body, and that, as our flesh is organized out of the material stuff which forms the external world, so are spirits formed out of spiritual stuff or spiritual matter composing that unseen world in which they live. "For every creature," he says, "is in its proper nature a body be it angel, soul or devil. For though they be fine of texture, nevertheless in their fabric, quality and form they are, in the fineness of their nature, bodies of fine texture, even as this outward body is in its fabric gross. And thus the soul being of fine texture took into itself the eye through which it sees, the ear through which it hears. In the same way did it take the tongue through which it speaks, the hand and, in short, the whole body and its members, and, interpenetrating it, performs through it all the necessary functions of this life." \*

\* Migne, p. 480A.

That this teaching of Macarius was based on a personal experience seems to be suggested by two questions with which he deals elsewhere. The passage is as follows : " Question : Whether anybody can see the soul through Revelation and Divine Light ? Answer : As these eyes see the sun, so do those who are enlightened see the image of the soul, but this is vouchsafed only to a few Christians. Question : Whether the soul has a form ? Answer : It has an image and form like unto an angel. For as the angels possess an image and form, and as the outward man possesses an image, so does the inward man possess an image like unto an angel and a form like unto the outward man." \*

There can be little doubt that Macarius possessed some psychic power, such for instance as belonged to Jacob Boehme, and had actually seen through into the other world and beheld certain images and shapes which he identified as souls or spirits. And it is because his visions had been of this definite, tangible nature that he regarded the souls and spirits as composed of a subtle material fabric. It was in much the same way that Jacob Boehme came to regard the whole of the solid universe as a hardened

or crystalized form adopted by a finer kind of matter. There is, in fact, in a passage just before one of those already quoted from Macarius, a statement which seems to show that he possessed this psychic power. It runs as follows : " Question : Whether any one can see his own soul by means of the Light, since some deny Revelation and say that vision comes through knowledge and perception ? Answer : There is a faculty of perception and there is a power of vision and there is enlightenment. And the one who possesses enlightenment is greater than the one who possesses perception. For his mind has been illuminated inasmuch as he has received a greater portion than the one who possesses perception. For he has caught sight within himself of that which completes the visions. But Revelation is another thing coming to a man when great matters and mysteries of God are revealed unto the soul."

This passage is slightly confusing, but the main drift of it is clear. There is a psychic power called perception, by means of which a man is able to behold invisible things and even his own soul. Illumination makes this faculty clearer, while that which he calls Revelation supersedes all such vision, imparting a knowledge



of a different kind. From the emphatic way in which Macarius speaks of this psychic perception and the clearness with which he distinguishes the visions of mere perception from those of illumination and from the mystical experience of Revelation it is not hard to guess that he has had experience of all three. Thus when he speaks of spiritual beings, as bodies, he is not giving us a mere speculation, but is trying to express that which he himself has seen.

Thus the relation of the natural body to the spiritual body may be stated as follows: The spiritual body lies dormant in the natural body, as the germ is in the husk; and therefore, when the natural body has been shed, the spiritual body continues still to live, and shall at last in heaven unfold the fulness of its powers.

The whole vast purpose of life throughout the world is one; and the same law of life is seen under a huge variety of forms in every part of the universe. Therefore it is that life in the material sphere is an apt symbol of life in the realm of spirit, and therefore too it is that an illustration taken from one part of the material sphere will supplement the meaning of one taken from another. Let us then take another example to explain the lesson taught

by St. Paul in the simile of the grain sown in the ground.

A caterpillar, after emerging from the egg, lives a particular kind of life. It can only crawl upon the ground, and might almost be said to be limited to two dimensions of space. After a certain time it shrivels up and passes into the shape of a chrysalis, from which, having burst its bonds and shed the enclosing husk, it rises in a different form endowed with the power of flight and free from the limitations of its previous existence. This is a fitting parable of the Resurrection. Man in his present earthly life is, when compared with the glory that shall be, like the poor helpless worm that can but crawl upon the ground. And as the gorgeous wings of the butterfly lie dormant in the caterpillar and awaiting to develop, yet at present cramped by the conditions suited to that early stage of life, so are the powers, which shall then be revealed in us, now cabined and constrained by our material form, but will be manifest in all their glory when at last our liberation is complete. Death is like the shriveling of the caterpillar into the chrysalis and affects only the outward body of the flesh, as that other process affects only the creature's

outward skin. And as the butterfly, having cast its skin, is in its new form the same creature (though with widened powers) that crawled upon the ground, so man having cast off this fleshly husk remains the same being that he was upon this earth ; though now with greater powers than he had possessed before. But in one respect the illustration is misleading. It ignores the Intermediate State ; or rather it tends to give a false conception of it. For the chrysalis is in a state of torpor before it changes into the butterfly. A caterpillar loses consciousness, apparently, before the final stage is reached. But it is not so with us when we die. We immediately cast off the slough of the earthly flesh and pass into a state where there is no loss of consciousness but rather the reverse.

A few words now must be said about this Intermediate State.

St. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians about the Resurrection, says nothing of the stage through which the soul must pass before that final consummation. He is writing for the ignorant (as he himself implies by the words "thou fool" with which he meets a possible objection), and therefore he contents himself

with a mere distinction between the natural and the spiritual body and avoids further refinements. Perhaps also the expectation of the Second Coming was so strong in him that he had not paused to form any speculations about the Intermediate State. There are, however, in other parts of the New Testament many hints on this subject. Our Lord, in the Parable of Dives and Lazarus, speaks of Dives and also of Lazarus as being conscious after death, though the resurrection has not yet taken place. His words to the dying thief imply a similar teaching. Death would be no break in the thief's consciousness : it would only lead him into another state where he would still retain his powers. Moreover St. Matthew tells us that after the Crucifixion many bodies of the saints arose and appeared to many in Jerusalem. It is quite true that this particular passage belongs to a section of St. Matthew which has not quite the same historical value as the rest of the Gospel. At the same time, even if this passage were not accepted (and there is no positive argument for rejecting it) the fact remains that it bears testimony to an early tradition and therefore shows what the Church believed in the earliest days on the subject of the Departed. And in

fact we know from other sources that the Jews believed in an unbroken consciousness after death. The practice of necromancy, which was forbidden among them, shows that such a belief was prevalent. Further testimony in the Gospel is the appearance of Moses and Elijah at the Transfiguration. They were certainly conscious and apparently in a higher state of consciousness than when on earth. This shows that the Intermediate State is a state of conscious life. The same thing is implied by our Lord's own Descent into Hell as interpreted in the earliest times. St. Peter tells us that He went there to preach to those in prison. This would be meaningless if they were not conscious. Again the Apocalypse speaks of the martyrs as crying out from beneath the Altar. This certainly seems to imply that in the Intermediate State they were conscious, living and active. The Epistle to the Hebrews implies the same doctrine in the splendid passage at the beginning of the twelfth chapter. This world is like a vast arena wherein we struggle for the prize and all around us, tier upon tier, are thronged the multitudes of those who watch our labours with breathless interest—a very cloud of witnesses. The imagery is quite unmeaning unless



this multitude is conscious. If the saints and martyrs of old have no consciousness in the Intermediate State, they can hardly in any intelligible sense of the word be spoken of as witnesses.

Thus the New Testament plainly teaches that after death the soul is conscious in the Intermediate World, and also it seems to imply that this consciousness is expressed in some bodily form. Moses and Elijah seemed to have appeared in such a bodily form at the Transfiguration, and it was in such a form, St. Matthew tells us, the saints of old were seen when after the Crucifixion they appeared to many at Jerusalem. Thus something must be added from other parts of the New Testament to complete the teaching of St. Paul as given in the 15th Chapter of the First of Corinthians. Besides the earthly body and the spiritual body there is also what may be called our intermediate body, which is the vehicle of consciousness during the condition of waiting. And this intermediate body, while it is free from earthly limitations, does not yet possess the full splendours of the spiritual body. This appears to be implied by the teaching of our Lord Himself when He says that those which shall

be accounted worthy of the Resurrection are like the angels. The final state of glory is that of the angelic or the spiritual body ; but this condition will apparently not be reached until the final Consummation is complete.

It is perhaps permissible to take St. Paul's illustration of the resurrection body and to give it a wider application which will include the intermediate body as well. The seed planted in the ground cannot put forth its powers until the germ has sprouted through the husk. This outward sheath, which is broken through and perishes, is like the earthly body which dies and mingles with the elements. The shoot, that now grows from the sprouting germ, is like the intermediate body which still develops in Paradise. Yet, for the further progress of the plant, this too must break, and the growing life within must push its way through the bark or outward sheath of the stem in order to continue its advance. And thus the branches, leaves and flowers grow from a central trunk through the impetus of life bursting through the outward husk containing it. Just so will it be at the Resurrection when each individual passes to a higher stage. The spiritual life breaking through the sheath of the intermediate body

will then expand into a new state of being, like a bud bursting forth into its own proper form.

It may thus be said that, roughly speaking, there are these three kinds of body—the Earthly, the Intermediate, and the Spiritual. To bring this view into harmony with St. Paul's teaching we must take the first two bodies as together forming the Natural Body. And there is no objection to doing this. Possibly both the Natural Body and the Spiritual Body consist severally of various interpenetrating vehicles, contained in one another as the bones are contained in the muscular tissues and these again in the skin. St. Paul, in a passage already quoted, says he was caught up to the third heaven. If there are thus three planes of heavenly existence it may well be that there are three phases or estates through which the body must pass before the final Goal is reached. And if the Spiritual Body is thus composed of elements the lower of which must be left behind before the central core is perfectly revealed and can perfectly perform its highest functions, it would be natural to suppose that there is such distinction of elements in the Natural Body as well, and that it also is composed of various wrappings, each necessary at a certain stage but

each concealing the one next within. If so, then the earthly body is but the outermost wrapping of the natural body ; and when this is laid aside at death, the conscious personality is living not merely in a body but actually in a natural body in the region beyond the grave.

## CHAPTER II

### ILLUSTRATIONS FROM OUR LORD'S EARTHLY LIFE

IT is remarkable and yet is not strange, that the doctrine of the Spiritual Body throws much light on certain difficult questions connected with our Lord's earthly life and His Resurrection. And it is remarkable because St. Paul, even if he was acquainted with the details which were afterwards woven into the Gospels, does not apply the doctrine to explain them, nor does he seem to have them in mind: in fact there are certain materialistic elements in the Resurrection narratives which his language appears at first sight to contradict even though it really explains them. But while the light thus indirectly thrown is remarkable it is by no means strange if St. Paul's teaching was in fact the result of his own previous experience. For all the truest experience of those higher powers which lie dormant in our human frame



is akin to something in the Incarnate Life of Him Who dwelt in perfect Manhood upon the earth. And thus the Gospel narratives based on historical evidence, and St. Paul's doctrine of the Spiritual Body, based on his own experience, in a wonderful manner confirm and illustrate each other.

At the very beginning of our Lord's earthly Ministry comes, in the Synoptic Gospels, His Fasting and Temptation. Apparently He had, in the crises at His Baptism, of a sudden become fully conscious of His Mission and His powers, and, going apart into the wilderness, under the strong compulsion of the Spirit, He wrestled and struggled and prepared Himself for the task that lay before Him. What then took place is a mystery beyond our feeble grasp. But the Gospels lift a corner of the impenetrable veil and enable us to form a dim conjecture. Apparently the question which He pondered during the Forty Days was this: How should He carry out the Mission to which He had been called? And part of the problem, perhaps the most pressing part of it, was this: How should He employ those miraculous powers which He now felt welling up within Him?

This is the meaning of that particular temptation which is recorded as the second by St. Matthew and the third by St. Luke. Our Lord was conscious that He possessed a power of rising from the ground unhindered by the law of gravitation, to tread the pathless ways of the air. And having this power, He was tempted to employ it so as, by an open demonstration of the mastery it gave Him, to convince the populace of His messianic office and win their adherence to Himself. He refused to make this use of the power that was His because faith in His Person and His claims must spring from something deeper than mere astonishment at any outward signs and wonders. And therefore, when the Pharisees demanded a sign from heaven, He refused. And yet He refused in such a way as seemed to imply that He could have done as they asked Him had He so desired. When asked on another occasion to do something that lay outside His particular province He based His refusal on the ground that He had not the authority for this particular work ("Man, who made Me a ruler and divider?") But when He refused to show a sign from heaven, He gave no such reason as this.

Instead there was the mere abrupt statement : "There shall no sign be given." Just so, in another place, when His claims were challenged He merely replied with the abrupt words "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." He could on that occasion have told them by what authority He worked, had they been worthy to hear it, and, in the same way, He could, when asked, have given a sign from heaven, if He had so desired. All through His earthly Ministry He was conscious of this power within Him. While He walked upon the ground, He could have left the earth and moved untrammelled through the air. And after His Resurrection one great manifestation of this power was shown when before the eyes of His disciples He ascended into heaven. This happened, indeed, after He had left terrestrial conditions behind and had passed on through the gate of death to another phase of existence. Nevertheless the power which then was shown of rising unhindered by the law of gravitation was one which He could, in some degree at least, have exercised even while He tabernacled in an earthly body of mortal flesh. And indeed our Lord did exercise this power once at least during His earthly

Ministry, when He walked upon the water. This miracle was a manifestation of the same mysterious forces, although (since water is more solid than air) they were now working at a lower level of intensity. And though this miracle apparently happened but once, there is something startling about the natural and almost casual manner in which it occurred. It leaves upon the mind the impression that our Lord, in thus treading upon the waves, was doing something which would have been quite usual with Him if He had so willed: but it was His custom to veil His glory, in some measure, even from the eyes of His disciples, revealing it to them only as they were able to receive it; and therefore, when He walked upon the water, He did so, not for the sake of parading His miraculous powers, but (as in the case of His other miracles) for the sake of bringing help by the use of such powers to those who were in need. His disciples were apparently in danger and distress by reason of the stormy weather; He knew of their trouble and wished to come to them; and therefore He came to them by what was to Him the most natural way, so as to lose no time.

It is a well-known fact that such a power as our Lord, in perfect measure, possessed within His human body of overcoming the natural law of gravitation has been manifested, in broken gleams, several times in the history of mankind. In fact so many instances of its working have occurred that it has been given the scientific name of levitation. St. Francis while at prayer was seen more than once to be lifted off the ground ; and a mediæval contemplative named Rulman Mersevia tells us in his autobiography that once, while engaged in religious exercises, he felt some strange force uplifting him bodily into the air to a height of some inches from the ground and carrying him forward thus suspended for a considerable distance. The rudiments of this strange force are probably in the body of every human being, though they have been manifested in comparatively very few, and, even where they have been manifested, the levitation seems as a rule to have been involuntary and beyond the subject's control. Apparently our Lord manifested some such power as this, but perfectly developed and controlled. He could apparently in His Human Body perform this act of levitation at will.



Just as a child, in strumming on a piano, may accidentally strike some harmonious chord, and, having done it once by accident, cannot repeat it even if he tries, while the trained musician can consciously and at will produce chord after chord in continuous progression, so have some of the most highly developed religious or psychic geniuses from time to time drawn from these mysterious bodies which we wear broken chords of some strange activity entering from another world, and yet have had no power to repeat these acts at will ; which acts the Son of Man, when He lived upon this earth, could perform and could control with absolute mastery ; thus drawing from His fleshly body the full riches of that heavenly harmony.

That the rudiments of this power belong, or may belong, to a human being as such is suggested by one of the Gospels. St. Matthew, in speaking of the Walking on the water, says that St. Peter asked our Lord to bid him come to Him, and that our Lord said : " Come." Then, according to St. Matthew, Peter left the boat to come to Jesus, but began to sink only because his faith was weak ; whereupon our Lord supported him, to prevent him from

sinking, with the words: "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" It is plain from this that the power exercised by our Lord in walking upon the water was not a merely isolated and non-human faculty. It is a power lying dormant in many at least of the human race and only prevented from being developed and used by the weakness of our faith. That this power will in the next world, when we are free from the fetters of the flesh, be one day exercised by all the true disciples of Christ is taught by St. Paul when he says that at the last day we shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and thus shall be for ever with the Lord. It is implied also by St. John when he says that we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. Of course the Apostles held that our bodies would then be in a different state from that which they are now. Still, the parallel between the action of the Lord and the anticipated experience of the disciples is worth noting. Christ in His Spiritual Body ascended; we in our spiritual bodies are to do the same. Christ while living in a material body could overcome the force of gravitation and cause His material body to move in obedience to

another law ; we, if our faith were strong enough, would sometimes be able to do the same. For that which He did on earth was a fulfilment of our human nature and not a contradiction of it.

Now, according to the teaching of St. Paul, we shall at the last day possess purely spiritual bodies, and in such a purely Spiritual Body our Lord ascended into heaven. It is not difficult to see that such a body as this would be independent of material laws and would mount as naturally into the air as material things fall to the ground. It would be, in fact, a perfect vehicle of the spirit or personality enshrined in it, and would, without let or hindrance, easily perform his will. No movement would be more difficult than any other ; all would be alike performed with absolute ease. If this is so, we can begin to guess at the hidden law which underlay the Walking on the water. That spiritual body which in us exists but as a germ, though developing more and more according to the spiritual state attained by the individual, had in our Lord reached the fulness of its powers. What in the highest and holiest of mankind is but an embryonic bud, had in Him blossomed into

a perfect flower. In a sinless human nature it could not but be so. And since our Lord's Spiritual Body was, during His earthly life, perfectly developed, He could by it exercise a perfect control over the earthly body which was its outward sheath, and could make the earthly body naturally obey its higher spiritual law. This principle underlay all the miracles which Christ worked, and this principle He manifested when He walked upon the water. The flesh had been transformed by this inner power until it was its perfect and obedient instrument, and so the Spiritual Body could lift it up in obedience to its own spiritual law, as the oxygen lifts up into the air the freight in the car of a balloon. Thus the strange miracle of the walking on the water, and the strange consciousness of an even greater power implied in the Temptation that He should cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple, however mysterious, are yet perfectly natural in the deepest sense of the word, if man possesses in the germ, and if our Lord possessed in a state of perfect development, what St. Paul speaks of as a Spiritual Body. The power of vegetable life within a plant overrides each moment the law of gravitation, and hence it

is that the plant grows upwards and spreads its leaves outwards on every side. While each particle would, if left to the action of that mechanical law which works upon all things, tumble to the ground by its own inherent weight, this inward force acting by a higher law, causes it to move in a wholly different manner. So too in the animal kingdom a similar force causes the blood perpetually to circulate instead of gravitating downwards in obedience to the law of attraction. Moreover, in the animal there is a power of independent movement still further superseding the mechanical law which it overrides but does not destroy. Each time I move my arm I am causing my material body to act in a way transcending the laws of matter. And these movements, whether involuntary like the circulations of the blood, or voluntary like the motion of my hand, are due to the fact that my material body is interpenetrated by my animal soul which is, as Aristotle says, its "perfection" or "fulfilment" as the bloom is the "perfection" or "fulfilment" of a flower. Thus the soul makes the physical body in some sense to transcend the law of gravitation. And if the language of St.



Macarius be accepted and the soul be regarded as actually a kind of body, then it is the action of a subtler body within this gross body of matter that causes this transcendence. When I move my hand it is through the "soul-body" by which my hand and my whole nervous system are permeated. And if within the "soul-body" there is contained a "spirit-body," how natural that this should exercise a further power of counteracting mechanical law and should (could it but gain full sway) lift at will the whole material body and hold it suspended in the air.

Now, an occasion is recorded when the Spiritual Body of Christ shone through the vesture of the flesh, and, before His Passion and Resurrection, was in some degree made manifest to the sight. And this occasion too was no isolated event in human history but was a transcendent exhibition of spiritual powers which have often been displayed, though in far lesser degree, within the experience of the human race. Round many of God's saints in times of prayer there has been sometimes seen a mysterious radiance; and instances of this are recorded in the Bible. We are told that the face of Moses when he

came down from the Mount shone with such a glory that the children of Israel could not look upon him, and Stephen when he stood arraigned by his unjust accusers was so transformed by such a light from within that all who looked upon him beheld his face as though it had been the face of an angel. But all these manifestations were partial and the light apparently shone almost entirely in the face. In our Lord's Transfiguration a radiance streamed forth from His whole figure and illuminated the very garments that He wore with unutterable glory, making them white and glistening so as no fuller on earth can whiten them. The Spiritual Body enclosed in the outer husk of the flesh so dominated this as to make it for the time transparent, and thus in that hour when our Lord was preparing for His Passion it flashed forth in rays of visible brightness.

Thus the Transfiguration helps to explain the Walking on the water; for both these miracles spring from the same mysterious fact. Both show the natural workings and predominance over outward conditions of that Spiritual Body dormant in our flesh and developed in the earthly body of our Lord to the complete fulness of its powers.

Thus within the material body, and interpenetrating it, is an organism of a subtler kind to which the name of "soul-body" may be given; and interpenetrating this another body of yet finer texture which is the spiritual body. How does this truth help us to understand and fit together the accounts of our Lord's Resurrection?

Now, in the first place, it is quite plain that the Body in which the Lord appeared after His Resurrection was not a material one. The fact that He came into the room where the doors were shut seems to make this quite clear. He was now existing in a different state from that in which His ministry had been performed. He had cast off the material wrapping of the natural flesh, and that was done away with for ever. Why the natural body had disappeared from the tomb is a problem which must be considered later. For the present suffice it to say that He had left it behind at His Resurrection to be henceforth conditioned by it no more. While, during His earthly Ministry, the Spiritual Body within had possessed complete dominion over its material vehicle, which it had thus transfigured with a supernatural power and glory,

yet it had never completely overstepped the limits of material existence ; and while lifting the material conditions of the natural body to the highest limits they could attain, it had not passed that boundary or cast material laws aside. After the Resurrection all this was changed. The liberated Body in which the Lord arose could pass through solid walls as a ray of light streams through a window-pane. What up to then had been a barrier to it was now a barrier no longer. It would be natural to rush at once to the conclusion that it was therefore a spiritual body in which the Lord arose. But if we take the narratives as they stand there are objections to this view. There is, in all the accounts of the Resurrection, a strongly marked material element. And though this could be explained, and is no doubt partly to be explained, as an accommodation to human weakness (as when the Lord bade Thomas touch His hands and side and then rebuked him gently for needing these outward tokens), yet some strange words which are recorded by St. Luke seem to show that this explanation is not of itself sufficient. On the occasion when the Lord is reported to have eaten before them He also said, St. Luke tells

us : “ handle Me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have.” Unless these words are to be explained away they mean that the Risen Body of Christ was not a spiritual body, but in a real sense possessed something which might be described as flesh. And in harmony with this are hints that we find elsewhere. The words to Mary Magdalene : “ I have not yet ascended to My Father ” seem to show that our Lord had not yet reached the last phase which should crown His Ministry. Some further stage of being awaited Him ; and when, forty days afterwards, He ascended into Heaven, He was by that outward act expressing for His disciples not merely the withdrawing of His visible presence from them but also an inward and final consummation of glory to which He was in that hour attaining. And hence, when He afterwards appeared to St. Paul at his conversion, He came in a different form from that which He had borne when He appeared on the first Easter Day. He now revealed Himself in a more glorified condition than that in which He had been seen before His Ascension. Hence the blinding radiance which seems to have swallowed up all human shape and the voice heard by those, who stood



near, as a mere sound from heaven and articulate to Saul alone. Our Lord was now living in the untrammelled Spiritual Body which was not quite the same as the body seen by the first disciples on the Resurrection Day.

What then was the Body in which our Lord appeared immediately after His Resurrection? If it was not a natural body, nor yet in the true sense a spiritual body, it must have been what may be called a "soul-body" suitable to an intermediate stage. This theory seems to meet all the facts. In the first place it makes our Lord's Resurrection the exact type to which ours will conform. St. Paul looked forward to an ascension of all Christians when they should be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and the hope of going to heaven is an essential part of Christianity. We may regard this hope as symbolic, and learn to think of heaven as a state of being transcending all limits of space, but this does not affect the question. It still remains true that we believe Christ to have reached a final stage of glory, and we hope one day to reach, through His grace, the same condition so to be with Him and like unto Him. And therefore, as our Lord's Ministry was completed by His

Ascension, so an ascension (since we can only think of it as such) must finally complete the existence of each Christian. Now, Christian thought has practically identified the resurrection of Christians at the Last Day with their ascension. St. Paul, for instance, in the passage just alluded to, seems to treat them as one and the same thing. "The dead shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together in the clouds." And in the same way he says in the First Epistle to the Corinthians xv. 51: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed," and goes on to speak of the instantaneous transfiguring change which will come upon all at the Last Day whether alive or dead. The living shall be transformed into a glorified state of heavenly being, and the dead shall be in the same moment both raised up and also transformed into that same condition. Thus their resurrection and glorification (or ascension) shall, he teaches, be one and the same fact. And in the same way our Lord Himself, in speaking of the resurrection, says that those who are accounted worthy of it are equal to the angels. This seems to suggest that the resurrection itself will bring them

to a state when they will exist in spiritual bodies.

Now, if this is so, and if Christ perfectly fulfilled the laws of human life, it follows that His Resurrection and Ascension were parts of the same great fact. In other words, it follows that His Resurrection was not complete until He had once more ascended into heaven. And this is perhaps unconsciously suggested by St. Luke in that foreshortening of events at the end of his Gospel which makes the Ascension there appear to have occurred on Easter Day. The manner in which this final event is related seems to show that the writer regarded it as completing the Resurrection. Thus then the forty days preceding the Ascension were an intermediate stage, and during them our Lord appeared in an intermediate "soul-body." Such a body is more subtle in its texture than ordinary matter and is not restricted by ordinary material laws, but there seem to be reasons for supposing that it can (like water freezing into ice) limit itself in certain ways and so assume material qualities. And perhaps, also, water evaporating into steam suggests some symbol of the change by which this intermediate

body is at last transformed into a spiritual one.

We are here touching a very mysterious subject; but there have in modern times apparently been well-authenticated instances of beings from the unseen world making themselves known under material conditions (cf. the angel coming to St. Peter in prison). In fact, this process of appearing under material qualities has been given a special name and is called materialization. Perhaps one of the most striking instances of this is recorded by a well-known scientific expert towards the end of the last century. Sir William Crooks, the discoverer of thallium, and afterwards President of the Royal Society, having approached the question of mediumship and kindred problems with an open mind (though biased somewhat towards scepticism), gradually came, through his own personal experience, to a strong conviction in the possibility of intercourse between the seen and the unseen world. He published accounts of the experiments he made and of the results. The most astounding of these are connected with a woman who, he says, materialized from the unseen world so completely that he was able to speak with her,

to touch her, to feel her pulse, to test her heart and lungs and actually, by her permission, to cut a lock of hair from her head, having traced it to the scalp with his finger to convince him that it grew there. And this lock of hair he professed to have before him on the table afterwards when writing an account of what had happened. Moreover, he says that this woman was seen at the same time by many others who were present, that she conversed with them all and that several photographs of her were taken. She appeared on more than one occasion, but finally said her work amongst them was done and then suddenly vanished. The story might be deemed incredible were it not given in sober earnest by a man whose whole life had been devoted to scientific research. Sir William Crooks staked his reputation on the truth of his narrative and faced the ridicule of the scientific world in consequence. Either the events he records are impossible or they actually occurred; the simplest explanation of them is that they occurred. And if this is so, they throw much light on the accounts of the Resurrection. Especially they illustrate the law of materialization. Such a law of materialization was at



work in the Appearances of the Risen Lord. The "soul-body" in which He now was living and acting, though untrammelled by material conditions, yet contained within itself in some strange way the elements out of which material conditions are formed, as the liquid nature of water contains within itself that which by a process of limitation and the loss of heat becomes the hardness of solid ice. In a true sense the Body of the Lord had flesh and bones; although these were of a different kind from those which belong to the natural body. His "soul-body" was, in a true sense, an organism and contained within itself in a subtler form the elements needed by the earthly organism which we at present possess, hence it was that He said: "Handle Me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have." Hence also that He ate before them; and hence, too, there is a real truth (though easily misinterpreted) in that primitive form of the Christian Creed which expresses belief in the Resurrection of the Flesh. Though our natural bodies are buried and mingle with the earth, some finer element now animating them survives through the intermediate life, and this element may be described as a finer kind

of flesh. But if it is true that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven, this stage must finally be left behind before the consummation is complete. And for the same reason our Lord must have left this stage behind when He ascended into heaven. And therefore those words which He uttered on the Resurrection Day when He bade His disciples handle Him could not, we may believe, appropriately be uttered by Him now.

The question may be asked whether any events in our Lord's previous Ministry would shed any further light on these materializations which occurred between the Resurrection and the Ascension? Now, it is a strange and significant fact that the Doctrine of the Spiritual Body which alone explains His Ascension is supported, as was seen, by certain hints which occur during the earlier parts of the Gospel narrative. The Transfiguration, the Walking on the water, the temptation to cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple, fit in with the Doctrine of the Spiritual Body and would seem to be mere isolated portents without it. And it is equally strange and equally significant that the law of materialization, which seems to underlie some of the Resurrection Appearances,

seems also to suggest the clue to the most astounding of all Christ's miracles. Probably of all the mighty works recorded in the Gospels none staggers the imagination and belief so utterly as the multiplication of the loaves and fishes and the turning of the water into wine. Of course if these things are in their very nature incredible, impossible and absurd, just as no evidence would induce one to believe that two *plus* two could ever equal five, so no evidence will convince us that they occurred. But if they might be manifestations of some mysterious law which also was at work in the Appearances of the Risen Lord, we can take the evidence as it stands and need not be blinded by prejudice. And certainly the two Feedings are among the best attested miracles in the Gospel narratives. They are both given with clear distinctions of detail by St. Mark, the earliest of the Evangelists, in whose Gospel also our Lord alludes to them both, emphasizing with details the distinctness of the two occasions. Accepting these miracles then as plain history, let us try to see how they illustrate this hidden law.

(Cf. the cakes given to Elijah. Cf. the *de-materialization* of the food eaten by Christ

after His Resurrection and the clothes He then wore.)

Our material bodies are parts of the material universe. They are organized into separate individual systems, but still they are surrounded by this material world on every side, nor can they exist except in such a medium. Now if, within this outer husk, I possess as a kind of inner wrapping a "soul-body" of a subtler texture, it is natural to suppose that this "soul-body" is itself organized out of some bigger whole of which it forms a part, being surrounded by it as my natural body is surrounded by the material universe. Thus all things are interpenetrated by a subtler and finer element, invisible generally to our ordinary senses and forming as it were another world which is the home of the "soul-body." We have of recent years heard much about the medium, but it is no new discovery. Jacob Boehme had apparently the power of seeing through the outward husk of gross matter into this hidden world, and he applies to it the ancient name of "astral matter," which is often met with at the present day. Now, if it is one quality of this subtle medium, when organized into a "soul-body," that it should

sometimes be able to limit itself so as to assume material conditions, it is only to be expected that one who had a perfect mastery over the laws of the universe should be able by using some hidden law to impose such limitation and material qualities at will on some portions of this fine substance which exists on every side. Such a power our Lord possessed. He was able to materialize for His own purposes this omnipresent element. And here once more the strange account of His Temptations fits perfectly into its place. On becoming suddenly conscious of the miraculous powers that were His He knew that He possessed within Him the power of producing materializations. This explains the strange temptation to turn the stones into bread. He had this power ; though He would not use it except for special purposes. He had this power, but it must be made subservient to the ultimate object of His Mission. If the Miraculous Feedings be accepted as authentic there is no difficulty in the Turning of the Water into Wine. This miracle was obviously one of the same kind, certain qualities being drawn from the subtle interpenetrating elements which, infused into the water, gave it the properties of wine. Accepting the

greater miracle, we have no difficulty in accepting the lesser one. And therefore, although the Turning the Water into Wine is given by no Evangelist except the Fourth, the evidence is quite good enough when this event is thus related with others manifesting the same great law. Our Lord's First Temptation and these three miracles, together with certain elements in the Resurrection Appearances, all thus converge and all are stray, broken hints throwing light upon each other and giving each other support.

Nor does it require any credulity to believe these things. Perhaps the most recent speculations of science on the ultimate nature of matter make a reasoned belief in them far easier than would have been thought possible a few years ago. It is now being taught by some leading men of science that matter is itself simply a form of energy, a kind of frozen force. Hence it is taught by M. le Bon that, instead of being (as was thought) indestructible, it can actually disappear and vanish into apparent nothingness. If such a thing ever happens (and he believes it does), it can only be because the force which had been existing as matter has now, by a change of rhythm so



to speak, assumed another form and is existing in some other way. M. le Bon also believes that as matter can pass away into this different form, so it can, out of it, come into being. If this is so, then natural science itself actually makes materialization a perfectly *natural* thing. According to M. le Bon's suggestion, the whole solid universe is, as Jacob Boehme taught, such a materialization out of some finer medium. And further light is thrown upon this question by the spiritualistic experiments by Sir William Crooks alluded to above. He assures us that he has seen the stalk of a plant taken by some invisible power and passed through a crack in the table narrower than the stalk, without in the least crushing it or making any mark upon it. Somehow the stalk appeared to be made elastic, as if it had been resolved into a less solid condition. And other events he mentions which would be considered utterly incredible were they not vouched for by a man of his high reputation in the scientific world. He declares that a bell, during one of these meetings, passed through closed doors into the room where he and his friends were sitting and was moved ringing in the air above their heads.

Such a thing, if related by an ordinary witness, might well be dismissed as utterly incredible. But when the story comes from a scientific expert, whose very preconceptions would have tended to make him sceptical, we are bound to ask if we can find any conceivable hint of a theory which would in some way explain how such a thing is possible. The recent theory that matter is itself a form of energy appears to come to our aid. The particles of matter composing a particular object consist of certain *electrons* of force vibrating at a certain rate. Now, if the rate of these vibrations could be increased to a *certain* point, presumably the energy would take on another form and the material object itself would apparently disappear. It would, if one might so express it, now exist in a fluid state. And if in the unseen world there are *certain* spirits which under *certain* rare conditions can for some particular purpose cause this heightening in the rate of the vibrations, which we cannot, it may be conjectured that they would under those conditions bring about results which no mechanical or natural law of the phenomenal world could ever produce, and render the solid object on which they

worked in some sense fluid or elastic. Thus it would be able to pass through a narrow crevice and then resume its solid properties again. The block of ice (to repeat again the metaphor already used), being melted into water by a heightened rate of the heat waves around it, could flow through a narrow pipe and then freeze again into ice of the same shape as before. Apparently such a thing can happen, and has actually happened in quite modern times.

Thus the material elements in the Resurrection Appearances, the eating of food before the Disciples and the invitation that they should touch and see, together with the first temptation, the turning of the water into wine and the miraculous feedings of the multitudes, spring apparently from some hidden law to the very verge of which modern science is being led. All were cases of materialization out of a plane of being next above this lowest plane of the visible tangible earth.

It now remains to be asked, What is the bearing of this theory on the fact of the Empty Tomb? If our Lord had arisen in a wholly spiritual body, the Empty Tomb would perhaps be a source of difficulty. Certainly one

would have expected the outward husk of the material body to have remained unaltered in the grave so as at last to mingle with the elements, as happens after death to this mortal clay of ours. Why was it that the Body disappeared? It may have been, of course, to help the disciples' faith; since, had they seen it remaining in the grave, it would have been harder for them, when they saw the Risen Lord, to believe that He really stood before them. At the same time, if this is the only explanation, there is perhaps about it an element of unreality. It is quite true that the Lord appeared under material conditions of solidity and so forth to help their faith; but then, if what has been already said is true, and if He was existing not as yet in a spiritual body but in an intermediate, or "soul-body," these materializations were a true and proper function of the state in which He was now living. And since He possessed a perfect mastery of that state, it was as natural for Him to exercise these functions now as it had been for Him to work His miracles during His life on earth. And therefore, though the disappearance of His natural body from the Tomb helped no doubt to build up the faith

of His disciples, yet we are tempted to desire that it should have been no mere piece of didactic display, but also a manifestation of some law in harmony with His whole bodily nature. Perhaps the theory of a "soul-body" with such properties as have been suggested may help to throw some light upon the difficulty.

It was suggested above that the soul-body is itself composed of different elements united one within another. Perhaps the higher of these form together what is generally meant by the "soul," while the lower is that web of unconscious powers which, permeating the natural body, is akin to the vital system of a plant. And possibly it would be more accurate to speak of this web as the "soul-body" in distinction from the soul itself. But the question is a mere matter of terms.

Let us consider this web a moment. There is in my natural body a certain fundamental property akin to the life of a plant. This property produces certain activities in my natural body, of which I am totally unconscious. Thus it is, for instance, that my hair grows through some living quality in the tissues, which, though it belongs to me, yet seems to have an almost independent existence

of its own. Now, when I die, my soul will leave the natural body, but this independent principle or quality will linger on for a few hours after my death. That is why the hair continues to grow a considerable time after death. Then this living web itself quits the tenement of clay, and its activity is seen no more. What happens to it then? Does it disperse as having no further use? Or is it still needed by the soul for some further purposes? If we may trust what is told us by some students of Psychic Research, it has a use. The soul receives it back and uses it in the fresh phase of life it has entered. Spiritualism is no doubt a dangerous thing; and, even where it is not mixed up with fraud, it opens the door to delusions and the misconstruction of the messages which come from the other world. At the same time it would be idle to refuse to pay any heed to what it claims as definite results. The messages it gives, however much distorted, probably contain some element of truth. And it would be somewhat rash to dismiss the whole of Sir Oliver Lodge's book "Raymond" as a mere unmixed delusion. Now, in that book the author professes to have learnt from communications from the other



world that this living quality in our natural bodies which survives our actual death is afterwards, when it leaves them, employed once more by the soul in its intermediate state. And if this is so, there is after all some truth in the popular conception that the soul and body are reunited at the resurrection. Only in that case the resurrection occurs for each one of us shortly after death. Perhaps it might be said that the resurrection then begins, though it is not consummated until eternity is reached.

Now, it is part of the Christian Creed that on the first Easter morning our Lord was in a different state of existence from that through which He had passed since the Crucifixion. There is some definite meaning in the words "He descended into Hell"; and the Church has taught from the first that during this interval He was in a disembodied state and resumed His body once again when the Third Day was come. According to the First Epistle of St. Peter He was put to death in the flesh but quickened in the Spirit. This implies that the flesh was laid aside at His death and that He passed on to the place of departed souls as a spirit without a body. It is no doubt

impossible always to fasten down the terms employed by the New Testament writers to the same definite connotations; at the same time there can be little doubt that this is the general meaning of the passage. And if this is so, it is in harmony with apostolic teaching to suppose that, when our Lord's natural body was laid in the tomb, it still retained in its texture certain organized vital elements which were afterwards withdrawn and joined once more to His Human Soul, and that this re-uniting of the soul with the "soul-body," or of the two sundered parts of the soul together, was that which we call His Resurrection.

Now, for some appropriate reason, when this "soul-body" thus left its earthly tenement, this latter could no longer retain its solidity and form. In some mysterious way, bereft of this permeating force, it vanished utterly away, leaving the grave-clothes to tumble empty to the ground, the shroud falling in one place just as it had been wrapped about the Form that now no longer filled it, and the napkin a little apart retaining, though now empty, the very shape in which it had been twisted about His Head.

But still the problem has not been touched.

Why should this process, akin to a kind of evaporation (if one may use the phrase), have occurred in the Natural Body of Christ, when nothing of this kind happens in ordinary cases? Here we seem to come to a tremendous mystery, and perhaps once more we shall find the details of the Resurrection narratives fitting in with certain strange hints and delicate suggestions which from time to time appear in other chapters of the Gospels. If so, it will be one more remarkable case of a mutual harmony and corroboration due to one fundamental spiritual law.

But this matter is bound up with the question of the traditional Christian teaching on the nature of physical death. And this will require another chapter.

## CHAPTER III

### THE NATURE OF PHYSICAL DEATH

THE Christian Faith teaches that physical death is an evil thing. In fact on this, as on every other subject that it touches, Christianity simply takes things as they are without attempting to explain them away in the interests of any theory. The natural repulsion which we all feel at the thought of physical death it accepts as a healthy instinct with a rightful place in our being. Thus it teaches that as the power of Satan working in the human soul issues in states and acts of sin, so the same principle working in our natural bodies produces pain, sickness, and death.

The clearest teaching on this matter is given by St. Paul. His doctrine may be shortly stated as follows: Adam by his transgression introduced sin into the world, and hence transmitted a tainted nature to all his posterity. The result of his transgression was that he himself became subject to physical death and

that his posterity also have been subject to the same hard condition.

Evil entered the world through Adam's sin ; and evil has reigned as a principle in the flesh of all Adam's descendants, producing a moral result which is sin and a physical result which is death. Sin and physical death are thus both connected together as manifestations of one and the same evil principle.

Now we must carefully distinguish between St. Paul's essential teaching on this matter and the framework in which he presents it. Modern science has of course proved that death existed in this world among the lower orders of creation long before the appearance of man. Nor does it leave room for any such sudden cataclysm as the theory of the Fall implies. We are not pledged to the belief that man was first created free from taint and then by his wilful act fell from this primitive estate. All questions concerning the origin of evil in the world are seen now in a different light from that in which they appeared of old. But these matters are the framework. The essential doctrine concerning the values and the inmost nature of things remain now precisely as it did 1900 years ago. You may prove that evil was

in the world long before the appearance of man, and you may prove that the whole world was affected with this taint; that does not touch the fact that evil is evil, that death and sin are forms of evil and are two foul blots on the creation.

Now, the reason why the central core of St. Paul's teaching on the subject of death remains valid and will so remain as long as the world shall last is that it is based on a spiritual experience and the ultimate heart of man is the same in all ages. St. Paul may employ theories to explain his intuitions, but the intuitions themselves are deeper than all theories.

And behind St. Paul's doctrine on the nature of sin and death there is a common experience of the whole Christian Church. As we know from the Acts of the Apostles and the writings of St. Paul himself, gifts of healing were among the results of the Holy Spirit's working. Miracles of healing constantly occurred, and the spiritual life conferred upon the Church gave to its members not only the power of overcoming sin but also in many cases the blessing of physical health. In fact the redemption of the soul from sin and the redemption of the body from sickness were so connected together that they



were regarded as two sides of the same Divine energy. This appears most plainly when St. Peter, on being charged with the miracle wrought on the impotent man at the Beautiful Gate, replies as follows: "If we to-day are being questioned concerning the good work wrought to the impotent man by what power this man has been cured (or 'saved') be it known unto you all that in the name of Jesus Christ . . . whom God raised from the dead in this Name this man stands before you whole . . . there is no salvation in any other, for there is no other Name . . . whereby we must be saved." The Authorized Version here obscures what is quite plain in the original. The act of healing is described by the ordinary word for it, which is a word meaning "salvation" and is the same word employed by our Lord when He says on more than one occasion: "Thy faith hath made thee whole," and by the disciples when they say that if Lazarus sleeps he shall "do well." There is therefore nothing strange in the use of the word here. But what may be considered remarkable is the argument built upon it. Having said that the man has been "saved" from physical infirmity, St. Peter forthwith connects this deliverance with

Christ's victory over physical death, and he then declares that Christ is the one Source of "Salvation," using the word now in a purely spiritual rather than in a physical sense. The obvious truth is that Salvation has two sides to it, one physical and the other spiritual ; and thus the term may be employed in such a way that the emphasis of its meaning easily shifts from one of these aspects to the other. The power of the Risen Christ saves the whole man, body as well as soul and spirit ; and, on the other hand, it is one power of darkness that manifests itself whether as sin or physical infirmity.

This was no mere matter of theory : it was the actual experience of the Christian Church in all its acts of healing. And this common consciousness is appealed to and implied, in more than one passage, by St. Paul. Thus he tells the Corinthians that the moral corruption in their Church has so weakened their spiritual power that the forces of darkness have been able to produce in their midst much sickness and many cases of physical death. Hence also excommunication was held to bring about results which were not merely spiritual.

The excommunicate person, being cut off

from the life of the Christian Church, was expected to suffer in his body sickness or even death as the consequence.

Now, it was in keeping with this actual experience of physical vitality springing from faith in the Risen Christ that the primitive Christians did not expect ever to die. The Second Coming, for which they were looking every day, would, they believed, transform their mortal bodies and in a moment of time clothe them in immortality. Hence, apparently, it was a shock to their faith when any Christians died. And hence the question answered by St. Paul in the 15th Chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. One reason why this belief gained so firm a hold on the early Church was apparently the personal *knowledge* that they had the first-fruit of the Spirit within them. Hence it was that they looked forward to the redemption of their bodies (Romans viii. 23).

Now this belief, grounded on this fact of a common experience, St. Paul shared with the whole primitive Church. Right up to the third period of his writings we still find him looking for the Return of Christ "who should change our lowly body to be made like unto His glorious body according to the mighty working whereby

He is able to subdue all things unto Him." His belief upon this matter remained throughout the same. It is summed up in his words to the Corinthians: "we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." In some way he believed that those who remained alive at the Second Coming of Christ would be so transformed by His power as to leave behind their old conditions and enter on a new spiritual state. And in that transformation their redemption would be complete. The body, by being thus glorified and transformed, would itself have been perfectly redeemed.

Thus St. Paul's conception of our bodily nature is clear and perfectly consistent; and moreover it is based upon an experience possessed by himself and by the whole Church. Shortly it amounts to this: Because we are under the bondage of sin our physical bodies are liable to decay: Christ, in redeeming the world from sin, gives to the believer a heightened physical life which banishes sickness and which will finally be raised to such a degree as to banish, destroy and prevent physical death itself.

Now, the first part of this doctrine is so obviously and plainly true that it needs no discussion. Pain, sickness and death are evil

things ; they are in fact the three forms of physical evil. And miracles of healing have occurred in every age of the Christian Church when faith has been sufficiently strong. But what of that startling primitive expectation that death itself would be abolished on this earth ? Was it a mere delusion, inherently foolish and absurd ? Or was it, like the longing for moral perfection, a thing that (though impossible in the existing state of the world) might be brought to pass if by some stupendous miracle the entire human race were wholly and utterly consecrated to God ? It is rash to dismiss as impossible that which was a strong conviction of the earliest saints. For this is no question as to the origins of things, and therefore cannot be answered by purely scientific evidence. It is a question of the latent powers dormant within mankind ; and, whatever the origin of life upon this planet and whatever the origin of evil, this is a matter of a different kind and would need a different sort of evidence. If some of the greatest of God's saints, experiencing within themselves the workings of the Holy Spirit, felt already the beginnings of this supernatural process within them which, could it but have full sway unhindered by all contrary

influences, might actually produce this tremendous change in their physical bodies so that they would pass from this life to the next by another gate than that of death, can we say that the thing is an absolute impossibility ?

Suppose that sin were utterly abolished and that all the spiritual powers of mankind, which are now divided one against another and run in conflicting channels, were united in one vast tide moving towards God and impelled by the Holy Spirit. What results would follow we can but dimly guess ; yet we can see that all misery and pain would at last have come to an end. The mighty flood of spiritual power welling forth from each individual soul, and so from the united brotherhood of mankind, would be manifest even in the outward fabric of our material bodies and would give us such a dominion over the outward forces of nature that miracles, such as were wrought by Christ when He stilled the tempest, or walked upon the waves, would be of daily occurrence. Our natural bodies would themselves be so transformed as perfectly to transmit and manifest all movements of the Spirit, and miracles of healing would only be unknown because all sickness itself would have utterly vanished away. Now if, through the



operation of the Spirit, this change were to take place in our bodies on this earth, they would have become so marvellously purified and refined as to have reached an entirely new condition. They would be so obedient to the rhythm of the Spirit that their old material rhythm would have been completely superseded. And, were this thing to happen, death itself would be done away. The body, in attaining to this higher, and more spiritual rhythm, would itself pass from the material plane to that more spiritual one beyond it. That system of energy or force which, vibrating at a certain rate of intensity, exists as the material particles of my natural body, would in being at last attuned to these higher and intenser vibrations have ceased to be material in the ordinary sense of the word and would be freed from the laws of solid matter. The ice would have been changed into water. In fact the converse of materialization would have taken place. As it is possible for beings in the other world sometimes to condense into a material state and thus, for a time, appear on earth, so would our bodies then as it were dematerialize and thus, without dying, pass from this world into the next. That which M. le Bon believes to take place occasionally in particles

of inert matter causing them (so he maintains) to vanish away into some immaterial form, would, by this spiritual process, happen in the whole organism of the human body. And so it would indeed be true, that we should not die, but that we should be changed.

Now the law of our human nature, which in us is hindered by sin, was perfectly manifested in the sinless life of Christ. In Him the Spirit had such an absolute mastery that the natural body itself was in all things the obedient instrument, and was completely saturated with the Spirit's inward force. Hence the power to sustain the Fast of forty days (though this could be paralleled from amongst the lives of the saints); hence also the miraculous power He exerted, not only on men's physical bodies but also upon the forces of external nature. Christ's natural body had undergone a change of rhythm perhaps unique in the history of the world. What if this change of rhythm at last became so complete that the natural body itself passed on to another stage of existence? It still remained flesh and blood but it was not flesh and blood in this lowest state with which we are familiar. It was flesh and blood refined and changed to a subtler kind of texture. And

if so, then He could (had He so willed it) have passed straight from this visible world into the invisible world beyond, and have mounted from this plane of being to the next without entering it by the gate of death. And if He remained still upon this earth in a visible, tangible form, it was not from any necessity but of His own free choice. Possibly the Transfiguration may have marked the entrance on this condition ; and, if so, there is a special reason why He spoke in that moment of His coming death. It was now open to Him to pass onwards without the necessity of dying, but He chose to turn away from the prospect and to take upon Himself the burden of mortality.\*

Now, if there is truth in what has been said, then death was in a sense an unnatural thing for Christ. And the conviction that this is so seems to be implied by the language of the New Testament about Redemption. The New Testament writers know as a matter of personal spiritual experience that they have been redeemed by Christ. When they try to put it into words it seems to amount to this—that Christ need not have died and would not have died in the natural

\* Cf. the Voice (1) at His Baptism, (2) His Transfiguration, marking two stages of development.

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course of events, but that He suffered death for our sakes. Of course it is quite true that if Christ had not come into the world He would not have died, but the New Testament writers seem to have meant and to have felt more than this. Apparently their teaching implies that Christ might, after coming into the world, have passed on to a higher condition without dying, but that for our sakes He turned back to meet His Passion. He might have passed on into the unseen world by a natural transition, but mankind was held captive by the power of darkness, and therefore, instead of claiming His own due privilege, He identified Himself with us and faced the power of darkness and wrestled with it in spiritual conflict and thus, by a spiritual anguish greater than any physical pain, He triumphed and redeemed us.

If the natural body of our Lord thus already during His earthly life transcended earthly conditions so that it was (had He but willed it) beyond the necessity of dying, then no external violence would by itself have sufficed for its destruction. And there are certain hints in the New Testament that He did not die from physical causes. The actual crucifixion did not kill Him. He died of an inward spiritual

struggle with the powers of darkness. The anguish that could rive His body and cause its death could come from no outward things but only from the depth of His own spirit. Hence that loud cry at the end upon the Cross which startled the centurion, who knew that the victims of that cruel torture died generally feeble and exhausted and with no strength to lift their voices in this manner. Hence the mysterious words "Into Thy hands I commend My Spirit" uttered as by One who, even in that hour, had control over His own life to keep it or relinquish it. Hence too the Blood and Water coming forth when His side was pierced, and showing the transverberation of the muscles in the heart due to mental anguish and to no physical causes. And hence the Death accepted when the inner struggle had now been accomplished and the victory achieved long before crucifixion could of itself have brought the end. Because the outward body was absolutely obedient to the Spirit and manifested perfectly all the Spirit's motions, therefore the mysterious agony which tore the Spirit in twain, must show itself in the outward body, and so broke it and bereft it of life.

That the physical Death of our Lord was

no debt which He was obliged by natural conditions to pay to the laws of the material universe is implied by the words which He is reported, in the Fourth Gospel, to have uttered : “ I lay down My Life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself ; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” How far these words represent anything actually spoken by our Lord it is impossible to determine. Yet Wendt maintains that the discourses of the Fourth Gospel do actually represent, though in a different form, the teaching of our Lord. And this passage may well represent something said by Him to the inner circle of His disciples. In any case it shows how the Church which produced and accepted the Fourth Gospel tended to regard Christ’s Death. Christians believed that He had power over His own life to keep or to surrender it, and that physical death was, for Him, no natural necessity.

Such was the sacred Body of Christ which hung upon the Cross and was laid in the rock-hewn sepulchre. It was real flesh and blood in a finer and more ethereal state than sin allows us to attain in this earthly life. It belonged already to the invisible order of things even



while, in obedience to the will of Him Whom it served, it was exercising its functions on the material plane. And therefore, when left empty of the Human Spirit by which it had been controlled, it gravitated naturally towards its own proper state, and slid from the seen into the unseen, from the material into the immaterial world. Even as in the room at Emmaus the Risen Lord vanished from sight and His outward body passed from its tangible and solid condition into another and more subtle texture, so did that same outward body (for it was the same) pass through the grave-clothes which were wrapped about it into an intangible and invisible order of existence. For a while, indeed, it had retained its solid properties; but when (as happens some hours after death) the vital elements were withdrawn to clothe once more the discarnate spirit, the change must inevitably come. The human spirit in life so permeated these vital elements, and through their activity touched the natural body into harmony with them, that the flesh itself had become an outward and inseparable crystallization of their inward power rather than a separable casket to contain them. And hence it could no more exist without them than the outer surface of a

temple could exist without the stones of which the building is made. The surface is the surface of the compacted stones and it is nothing more. So when the organized elements of life passed away from the physical Body as it lay in the holy sepulchre, they left behind them nothing but the grave clothes. They absorbed and carried in their passage all those properties which had lain within the tomb in a solid material condition. These properties dematerialized and utterly vanished away. And thus after death was at last brought to pass that change which would naturally have been accomplished without death ; and thus the proper consummation of all Christ's earthly life, though delayed for a time by that labour which His redemptive love imposed upon Him, was perfected in the hour of triumph when death was swallowed up in victory.

Now, if this principle has in it any truth, it helps to explain how, though the Body of the Risen Lord was, until the Ascension, not as yet a spiritual body, He nevertheless appeared to His disciples as One belonging to the Spiritual order of existence. It helps, in fact, to show how the Resurrection was a pledge not only of a future life but also of a future glory. For

certainly it meant to the first believers not only a continued existence in the other world but also a triumph over the powers of darkness. The three Apostles who saw Moses and Elijah on the mount of Transfiguration must have believed them to be alive, and yet they did not look upon them as exactly in a Resurrection state. Those who, according to Jewish belief, sometimes appeared from the other world (as in the Gospel of St. Matthew the saints of olden time appeared in bodily form at the first Easter to many in Jerusalem) were not thought to have as yet attained the Resurrection. John the Baptist, whom Herod and many of the people supposed to have returned to earth from the other world in the Person of our Lord, was not for that reason held to have triumphed finally over death. Though men lived beyond the grave and from that mysterious region revisited this earth, still the Resurrection of the dead had not as yet come to pass. But Christians held that Jesus Christ not only lived and reappeared on earth after His Crucifixion, but that He lived and reappeared as the Conqueror of death. What is the cause of the difference ?

It lies in this : that though there was a

further process yet to undergo before that final glory of heaven was attained, yet that process had now begun. The Resurrection commenced what was completed by the Ascension. And this thought fits naturally into its place if our Lord's material Body passed at the Resurrection through such a change as has been suggested. Just as the natural Body gravitated at the Resurrection into an immaterial condition, so did it now in this immaterial condition gravitate towards an ultimate spiritual glory. Having become dematerialized it still continued its advance to higher and yet higher levels, hastening on to the time when it should be at last completely spiritualized. And thus the dematerialization was the first step in a mighty course of development. Before His Death the natural Body of Christ had been gravitating towards a completely spiritualized state; and hence the passage from the material to the immaterial at the Resurrection was the mere beginning of a stupendous movement, the ultimate end and attracting force of which lay on a yet higher plane. Life in its progress towards its full perfection must pass through the intermediate levels as a flower must bud before it can bloom. And as the bud is the necessary beginning of

the flower's consummated life, so was the Resurrection the beginning of Christ's ultimate glory. And as the material qualities of the natural Body were contained, in another and more plastic form, within the texture of the immaterial "soul-body," so were, and are, the subtler qualities of this contained in a yet finer and more marvellous form within the spiritual body. For if ice is, in a sense, contained in water, so is water also contained in steam. And therefore nothing is lost. The final state of glory is a redemption, in some sense, of the physical body itself, a redemption and consummation of all our human life. And yet the change is now so great that a materialization of the spiritual body would (we may suppose) be unnatural. Such materializations would (we may conjecture) be natural to the body only while it exists in that less exalted condition which is next above the plane of terrestrial life. Perhaps that is why our Lord appeared under material conditions during the few days after His Resurrection, but after His Ascension was beheld by St. Paul in a different state transcending all earthly limitations.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE APPEARANCES OF THE RISEN CHRIST

THE question now arises : Are there any further details in the Gospel narrative which seem to confirm the theory that has been suggested ? Is there anything tending to show that Christ's Body had passed at the Resurrection into an immaterial state which was itself the beginning of a final spiritual glory ? Does anything in the Gospel narratives suggest that the materialistic elements of the story, though necessary and natural under the condition in which our risen Lord appeared, were rather concessions to the human weakness of the disciples than clear indications of the process through which the Lord's Body was now passing in the unseen world ? Now, as we read the different narratives carefully, we may notice one striking fact. There seems to be a kind of graduated scale regulating the materialistic manifestations. Sometimes the material qualities are prominent, at others they



fall into the background. And the difference seems to depend upon the individuals to whom the Lord is appearing. Some of the witnesses are bidden to touch Him, others are dealt with in a different way. Can we find some principle underlying this diversity of action? Probably we can, and probably it is of a very simple kind. It amounts to this: the greater the faith of the witness the more ethereal is the manifestation; the less the faith of the witness, the more material it becomes. Let us trace this principle in the Gospel narratives.

It may be reverently supposed that the one person upon earth who had entered above all others into the Mind of Christ was the Mother who bore Him. She, with the insight of a Mother's love, had treasured up and brooded over many memories of His early days, concerning more than one of which we are told that she "kept these things in her heart." And, knowing the secret of His miraculous Birth, she was aware that her Son had a special destiny before Him. And therefore, according to St. John, before He had as yet worked any miracles she guessed (as her conduct at the marriage supper showed) that He possessed within Him a latent miraculous

power. Throughout His Ministry she keeps almost utterly in the background, but that spirit of humble reticence was the more likely to surmise the greatness of His work. With the silent intuition of love the Virgin Mary must have seen deeper than any other into that unfolding Character, and, at the end of His earthly Ministry, she stood faithful by His Cross. Now, if she had this insight and this spirituality of mind, she may perhaps have grasped and understood things which the other disciples had not as yet been able to realize. Our Lord had been constantly speaking of His coming Death and Resurrection; but most of the disciples were so obsessed with their own expectations of an earthly kingdom that they could not grasp His meaning. What if the Virgin Mary, hearing those same predictions, kept them also in her heart to work and grow within her? What if she, brooding on these sayings, had come to realize that He could not be holden by death, and therefore to expect with confidence that He would rise again? If this is so, then a strange fact is made quite intelligible, and we can see why the Mother of the Lord apparently did not come to visit His Sepulchre on the first Easter

Day. Other women came early to the Sepulchre, but the Virgin is nowhere mentioned amongst them ; and, had she been there, the omission of her name would be hard to account for, especially as St. Luke seems to have gained much information concerning Christ's early days from her, and more especially if the Fourth Gospel is by that *Loved* Disciple who, after the Crucifixion, took her to his own home. It seems unlikely then that she came with the other women to the Tomb. And that must have been because she knew there was no need. The others came to complete His burial and brought spices to embalm the body. She knew that the Tomb would be empty, and so she came not to seek the living amongst the dead.

And therefore it is not recorded that the Lord appeared especially to her. Because her faith was strong enough to dispense with any such aid, she was allowed the privilege of believing without any evidence of the senses. No doubt she was with the assembled disciples on some of the occasions when the Risen Lord appeared to them ; nevertheless it is strangely significant that there is no mention of her having received a special manifestation to herself.

Next, perhaps, in spiritual insight would be the disciple whom Jesus loved. He had lain on our Lord's breast at the Last Supper, and more than once he showed that intuition which love alone could give. He too had stood by the Cross of Jesus and had, at the Lord's behest, taken the Virgin Mother to his home. And there perhaps she had revealed to him the confident hope she nourished in her heart. Hence on the Resurrection Morning when, hearing the tidings of the empty tomb, he ran to the spot and saw the grave-clothes lying as they had collapsed when the Body vanished, the whole truth flashed on an instant through his mind. The evidence of the grave-clothes was enough ; and hence, without further proof, when he saw them he believed. Far otherwise was it with Simon Peter, who, coming to the Tomb at the same time and seeing the same sight within it, was not as yet convinced, but "departed wondering at that which had come to pass." And therefore we can see a reason why our Lord appeared especially to Simon and yet, so far as we know, did not appear especially to the Beloved Disciple. As the Lord's Mother had believed through an inward conviction without any external evidence at

all, so the Beloved Disciple believed on the mere evidence of what he saw within the Tomb. He, like the Virgin Mary, was encouraged to seek for no more tangible material proof.

Next in devotion and insight you would expect to find Mary Magdalene. She had been rescued from a terrible life and her devotion had ever since been the greater. And the exquisite picture given by St. Luke of that home where, when Jesus came, she chose the better part, with which also the hints in the 11th Chapter of St. John and elsewhere in the Gospels so perfectly agree, suggests that she was one who stood very near to Christ. And therefore, naturally, she was one of those that came before dawn to the Tomb. And her devotion is beautifully shown in St. John's account of what followed. The women find that the Tomb is empty and most of them go sadly away. She, however, with a grief greater than theirs, seeks for the Beloved Disciple to share the sad tidings with him. That disciple afterwards, in describing all that passed, wrote down merely what he saw and heard. Hence he says nothing of the other women, but mentions only Mary Magdalene as she alone came to him. Nevertheless her

words imply that the others had been with her ; for she does not say, “ I know not,” but “ *we* know not where they have laid Him.” When the Beloved Disciple and Peter hasten to the Tomb she, with that same dumb instinct of faithfulness, follows as well as she can and stays by the spot after they have gone away. Then comes the Appearance of Christ Whom at first she does not know, and the words she now utters, being alone (“ *I* know not,” instead of “ *we* know not ”) are a delicate touch in the wonderful picture. Every detail helps to give the impression that she was one whose heart was possessed by the love of Christ, and therefore endowed with a deep spiritual insight. Now, this being so, the manner of Christ’s Appearing to her is the more remarkable. He makes Himself visible before her and yet in such a strange and lowly guise as to conceal rather than reveal Himself. And hence at first she mistakes Him for the gardener. Then He makes Himself known to her simply by the tone of voice in which He utters her name, after which there follows one of the most wonderful details in the whole Gospel history. She turns to clasp Him by the feet, but He forbids it. “ Cling not to Me, for I am not yet ascended



to My Father ; but go unto My brethren and say unto them that I ascend unto My Father and your Father, to My God and to your God." Christ would have her understand that He has passed away from earthly conditions and belongs to another sphere. She is not to clasp the Body which she sees before her, as if it belonged to this world. And so the words may be paraphrased thus : "Do not clasp Me as if this Body of Mine were a material body, I am living now in an intermediate stage, preparing to ascend up into heaven. And the only reason why I can now appear under these material conditions is that this final spiritualization is not yet complete. I belong now to a heavenly order of existence, though I have not fully entered upon it." Thus we see that the Lord, while appearing to Mary Magdalene under material conditions, gives these as little prominence as possible, and instantly directs her mind away from them towards a higher spiritual order of things, to which He was now passing on. Just as much material detail was introduced as would convince her it was Himself ; but, because deep love had given her the power of faith, she was called at once to cast away the deceptive aid of outward things and to

press on to a clearer vision of the spiritual truth.

Another Appearance is recorded, though by a different Evangelist, which bears certain resemblance to the one we have just considered. It is the Appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. To them, as to Mary Magdalene, the Lord appeared in the guise of a stranger ; and they, like her, were accosted with a question, to establish a link of sympathy and encourage them to trust Him. Moreover they, like Mary, recognized Him at last, not through knowing His form and features but through a familiar act He performed—the breaking of the bread which brought back to their minds the feedings of the multitude which they probably had seen and perhaps too the Last Supper, of which they may have heard, just as Mary recognized Him by the mere tone of His voice. Finally His vanishing immediately afterwards would, like the words to Mary, direct their thoughts away from the material details of the Appearance and teach them that He belonged now wholly to the unseen world. The chief difference in principle between this Appearance and the one to Mary Magdalene is that more words were

spoken at the beginning and the preparation was thus longer, as, little by little, Christ opened the Scriptures while their hearts burnt within them. Thus we should expect to find that these two disciples belonged to the inmost circle of Christ's followers and possessed a power of love and spiritual insight second only to that of Mary Magdalene herself. Who were those two disciples? One of them is mentioned by name. He was Cleopas who, the Fourth Gospel tells us, was the husband (or the father) of the Blessed Virgin's own sister. Thus Cleopas was actually bound by ties of relationship to the Mother of Christ. He must have known her intimately, and may therefore have heard from her lips an expression of that confident hope which perhaps had influenced the beloved disciple. In any case, since Cleopas was thus connected with her, he would naturally belong to the innermost company of Christ's friends. And this is borne out by the fact that his wife (or daughter) was among those who stood by the Saviour's Cross. Now, who was the other of the two disciples to whom our Lord appeared on the road to Emmaus? It is a natural guess to suppose it was St. Luke himself. He is the only Evangelist to record

this particular event, and he gives it with such vivid detail as would seem to spring from personal reminiscences. Moreover, the fact that he gives the name of one disciple but not of the other would, in this case, naturally spring from that self-effacement which we would expect in an Evangelist. Now, the early chapters of St. Luke can only have come from the Virgin Mary herself. Thus the writer of them must have known her intimately. Therefore if the companion of Cleopas on the road to Emmaus was St. Luke, he, like Cleopas, was intimate with the Blessed Virgin and a member of the innermost circle about the Lord. Thus these two disciples would naturally stand high in their power of spiritual perception. They would be more ready to believe than many of the disciples, and in fact the words of Cleopas, in which he speaks of the things which have happened, reveal a mind already beginning to be perplexed by the stirring of that which soon might grow into faith. Hence the allusion to the Third Day. He remembers how Christ had foretold that on the Third Day He would rise again, and hence he is deeply stirred by the Empty Tomb and the vision of angels. What perplexes him is that those who, after receiving

the news, went to the Tomb did not see the Lord Himself. If, on going there, they had actually beheld the Risen Christ, Cleopas was not unready to believe them.

Thus the state of mind revealed is one prepared to believe. It is not a condition of sheer and utter incredulity. Such a state of mind Christ by His conversation first develops until it almost ripens into faith, and then, revealing Himself by the mystic act of breaking bread, vanishes and leaves that faith to seek its object in the world unseen.

The contrast is great when our Lord is dealing with the other disciples all together. Here He must suit the details of His Appearance to those whose spiritual apprehension was the weakest. He must overcome the incredulity of those who had utterly refused to believe the tidings brought by the women (St. Luke xxiv. 11). Although they were His chosen Disciples, yet their faith was very weak. Hence, to convince them, Christ bade them feel Him and watch Him eat before them. It was to them that He used the startling words : " A Spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have." The all-important thing was to convince them that it was Himself alive and

in bodily form. Their faith would not yet rise to higher things. They could not have grasped the thought that He belonged entirely to an invisible order, and was gravitating towards an ultimate spiritual glory. And hence, for them, the Lord deliberately put the most materialistic elements right into the very foreground.

So too it was with St. Thomas. Here again, because the Apostle's faith is weak, the Lord throws a deliberate emphasis on the solid and material state in which He appears. And yet, even in doing so, He gives a clue to His action. St. Thomas had said he would not believe unless he touched the wounds of Christ with his own hand. Therefore, when Christ appears, He bids Thomas do precisely that which he had said would satisfy him. He displays the wounds in His hands and bids Thomas put his fingers into them and thrust his hand into His side. Moreover, the gentle rebuke with which He receives the Apostle's confession of belief is full of deep significance : " Because thou hast seen Me thou hast believed, Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." In the very moment when, condescending to human weakness, He appears



under the most material conditions, He seeks to wean Thomas' mind away from those very conditions to a faith that does not demand these tangible visible proofs because it knows that the Risen Life belongs not to this earth but to the invisible world.

The last Appearance mentioned by any of the Gospels before the Ascension itself is that in the last chapter of St. John. This passage describes how the Lord appeared to some of the Apostles by the Sea of Galilee. And since they had now come back from Jerusalem and had so far grown used to the experiences of the past few days that they had returned once more to their fishing, we may gather that some time had passed. They were now all convinced of our Lord's Resurrection and were awaiting His further commands. Hence, when the Lord appears, it is, as He appeared to Mary Magdalene or the two disciples near Emmaus on the first Easter Day, in a strange form so that at first they shall not know Him. Then, as He had made Himself known in the two previous cases by the utterance of a name, or by the breaking of bread which recalled previous miracles, so He now makes Himself known by the repetition of the miracle which

He had performed when the Apostles first were called. The conditions were much the same and would help to emphasize the parallel. They had just been toiling all night without success, as on the previous occasion, and thus when their nets were again filled with the miraculous draught it was natural that the Beloved Disciple should straightway guess the truth. No further proof was now given them that He who stood upon the shore was the Risen Lord. Their faith during the last few days of marvellous experience had grown to such a degree that they accepted without question the Beloved Disciple's intuition. Hence the strange aloofness of Christ on this occasion. They know it is Himself and yet they dare not question Him. He speaks to them with absolute authority, giving Peter the opportunity of unsaying his threefold denial, foretelling his future martyrdom, claiming his unqualified service and claiming also the right to do as He thought best with the lives of the others present. Our Lord assumes that they know who He is, although His form is changed, and therefore He gives them no proof. One cannot help feeling the conviction that He came in this altered form so as to show them that the old

phase of earthly life had passed and He was now visiting them from another place of being. It was necessary that He should appear under material conditions for the sake of holding converse with them ; but, by making those outward conditions as unfamiliar as possible, He was teaching His disciples not to identify His present state with the earthly one in which He had been known to them. They must now look beyond the material form to a life whose energies belonged to another world.

Thus it would seem as if one dominating principle runs through all the Appearances vouchsafed by the Risen Lord. Where faith was weak the material element was strongly marked ; and, where faith was strong, this element receded. And it is a testimony to the historical truth of the Gospels that the facts which illustrate this principle do not exist in a single tradition but need to be collected and pieced together from different narratives. Moreover, the very nature of the underlying principle is itself a striking proof that the Appearances were real. If they had been delusions the principle regulating them would have been of an exactly contrary kind. Those whose faith was very strong might have

unconsciously persuaded themselves (if such a delusion be possible) that they saw and touched the Risen Lord and spoke with Him ; those whose faith was not so strong might have imagined that they saw and heard Him, but could scarcely have fancied that they touched Him. Or they might have seen some stranger and have almost fancied he was the Lord ; but, if so, they would unconsciously have clothed him with the familiar features and form. And those whose faith was weakest would have seen and heard nothing at all, except the empty tomb (supposing that some one had taken the body away). If the Appearances had been delusions, then the greater the faith of the witnesses the more material would have been the details.

And in this connection there is one more point to notice. Christ's dealings with mankind after His Resurrection are in keeping with the method of all His previous work. For, during His earthly Ministry, He devoted all His efforts to training those who had some faculty of belief, while from those that were hardened in unbelief He turned away. Following the rule which He Himself had given, He would not cast His pearls before swine, or cast

that which was holy to the dogs. And therefore when the Pharisees demanded a sign from heaven He refused without giving any reason. On the other hand, in dealing with those who sincerely wished to believe, He not only wrought signs and wonders but also appealed to these in support of His supernatural claims. Thus He confirmed the tottering faith of the Baptist by pointing to these mighty works which He was performing ; and He sought to strengthen His disciples' confidence in His power by reminding them of the two occasions when He had miraculously fed the multitude. Nevertheless, even here He strove to shift the emphasis of proof from the material signs and wonders to the deeper evidence of the Spirit. Thus the climax of the evidence in His reply to the Baptist is the bare spiritual fact that the poor have the Gospel preached to them. Thus, too, He welcomes with special joy the faith of the centurion who can believe in His power, though exercised at a distance without seeing any outward act. And thus it is also that He is unwilling or even perhaps unable to work a miracle until the suppliant has given proof of a real and sincere faith.\* In all His

\* Syro-Phœnician—Two blind men.

miraculous workings He turned away from the insincere and unbelieving towards those who had some germ of faith. And, while he helped these by His miracles, He laboured to lift up their minds beyond the outward action to the spiritual principle behind it. And this method is illustrated by the care with which He chose out the little inmost band of disciples and devoted His especial care to training them.

Just so it was after His Resurrection He would not appear to the enemies who had slain Him. If they believed not Moses and the prophets, neither would they believe though one rose from the dead. Therefore He showed Himself only to His disciples, and in these manifestations He still sought to train them and lead them onwards. So were they being prepared for the day when, seeing Him ascend up into heaven, they knew that the outward appearances must henceforth cease because He was reigning in a spiritual state which utterly transcended all terrestrial conditions. Once, and once only, did the Lord appear again, when He was seen at the conversion of St. Paul. And then the very manner of His appearing showed that all the things of earth had been left far behind.



There remains one further point for consideration, which appears at first sight to be the merest trifle and yet when pondered carefully is not without importance. For it is remarkable how the very finest details of the Resurrection narratives may (as we have already seen) possess the deepest significance and hint at tremendous mysteries. The point in question is the fact recorded by St. John in the following words: "And when He had said this He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain they are retained" (St. John xx. 22, 23). It may seem a small matter that the Lord here conferred authority on the disciples by breathing on them; and yet perhaps this method of transmission serves to indicate that spiritualized condition on the beginning of which He now had entered. During His earthly Ministry our Lord, when He employed an outward act for the healing of disease, generally touched with His hands the person He was curing. And this action was no arbitrary or altogether conventional sign. It was itself the natural and appropriate means by which the gift was bestowed. The inward,

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spiritual powers, coming forth from that Spiritual Body which was veiled by His outward flesh, permeated all the intermediate qualities of life belonging to His human soul and to its organized energies, and thus finally streamed forth as an influence radiating from His natural body to confer physical healing upon those who asked His aid. A physical vitality streamed forth from His spiritual body through its ultimate connection with the spiritual body within. And when He touched the sick to heal them His touch actually conveyed this physical influence from His physical body to theirs, so that, entering in, it might break down all the barriers and allow the inner tides of life to rise and circulate unhindered. Therefore it is that once when a woman came behind Him in a crowd she was healed by the mere touch of His garments, and the Lord, we are told, was conscious that virtue had gone out of Him. Physical contact had conveyed a physical vitality. And the same principle explains why, on more than one occasion, He spat and touched the affected part with the spittle. It was a common belief that the saliva contained some special healing property, and our Lord, to help the faith that needed

outward signs, made use of this common belief. That which had formed part of His own physical body was thus made the instrument for conveying physical recovery.

Now, there must have been some reason why, after the Resurrection, the Lord conveyed spiritual authority to the Church, not by laying His hands on the disciples, but by breathing on them. If mere symbolism had been all that was needed, the Laying on of hands would have been the most natural method, as indeed it has universally been the method in the Church by which the Bishop transmits the gift of which he is the channel. Analogy suggests that, when the Lord breathed on the disciples, He did so because this was the appropriate way of conveying the Spirit to them. Just as He touched the sick with the hands of His physical body to convey the gift of physical health, so He breathed on them in His Risen Body to convey the Holy Spirit. Thus the Holy Spirit was actually in some manner radiating from the breath He breathed. The Bishops afterwards used the laying on of hands for transmitting this power because they were mere instruments and the power was not their own but His. He breathed the power

forth to show that it came from the depths of His own being. The breath of life is an apt symbol of the Spirit, as the very etymology of the word "spirit" shows. And thus the very act of giving the Spirit by this means was a claim to be the Source and Origin of all the Church's spiritual life. The Spirit He conveyed was His own.

So much for the symbolism of the act. But, as has been said, it was more than mere symbolism. Or rather it was symbolism in the primitive meaning of the word according to which a symbol actually conveyed that spiritual reality which it expressed. The breath of the Risen Christ conveyed the Spirit; the Spirit was *in* His breath. And this fact seems to imply that the outward body or "soul-body" which He wore was the almost transparent vesture of the spiritual body. The ultimate spiritualization had begun on Easter Day.

And as we read the passage can we not feel that this breathing was no act of ordinary breathing? If we try to realize the scene, there is perhaps something grotesque in the suggestion that our Lord in the ordinary sense breathed upon His disciples. Surely that which the Evangelist is trying to express but cannot,

because all human words fail him, was a spiritual process by which a spiritual influence like the Pentecostal wind streamed forth from the Saviour's lips and touched that little band and sank into their hearts and bathed them in unutterable bliss and sweetness. The sheer grotesqueness of the incident, if the words are taken to mean what they would ordinarily mean in our earthly life, a grotesqueness so out of keeping with the austere and gracious majesty of the events in which the passage is embedded, makes this spiritual interpretation of them seem almost inevitable. Moreover, the fact that there were several present points in the same direction. Our Lord might, of course, be conceived of as breathing on each one separately and then pronouncing the words to all of them together; but the account seems to suggest that He not only addressed them but breathed on them all together. And this would be almost an impossibility if it were an act like physical breathing. But a stream of spiritual influence, such as was suggested above, would (it may be supposed) fill the whole room and enwrap them all in its penetrating power.

This influence was breathed forth from the spiritual body. It was a spiritual breathing.

And thus that spiritual body, which under earthly conditions had shone through the flesh at the Transfiguration, now manifested its glory in a more ineffable manner through a subtler and a more responsive medium. And thus, even while the "soul-body" appeared under material conditions, the disciples were drawn upwards to look beyond it to the glory of that spiritual body into which it was soon to be absorbed.



## CHAPTER V

### ON THE MIRACLES OF RAISING THE DEAD

THE conception of our Lord's Risen Body which has thus been reached seems to spring naturally from an unbiassed reading of the Gospel narratives. If we take the plain tale that is there told us as the straightforward account of honest men who were too strongly convinced of the facts which they record to be troubled by apparent discrepancies, and if we accept these facts and examine them closely, we can trace some such underlying principles as have now been suggested. These principles become yet clearer when we compare the accounts of our Lord's Resurrection with what we are told about certain miracles which at first appear to be of the same kind. More than one occasion is mentioned in the New Testament of the dead being restored to life. But these events were emphatically regarded not as resurrections but merely as resuscitations. Those who were thus

raised from the dead had not, through this act, been brought to a higher phase of being, but merely restored once more to earthly conditions. The Gospel narratives make this quite plain, and thus unconsciously point to the great difference between these miracles and the Resurrection of Christ. Lazarus, for instance, takes his place once more in the family circle and is present at a social gathering just as in days gone by. And the first necessity for Jairus' daughter, on her being brought back to life, is that she should be given something to eat. She is still weak as the result of her sickness.

But perhaps the most astonishing point of all is the utterly unconscious indication in the New Testament that those who were thus brought back to life had never been really dead at all. They had been in a state of coma which was believed by all the witnesses, and by the Evangelists themselves, to be death; and yet so true and faithful is the record of the sacred writers that the trifling details are in some instances preserved which suggest that they are mistaken. Just as, by taking the Resurrection narratives as plain statements of facts, we gain extraordinary light on the

conditions of life beyond the grave and are led from stage to stage of the most astonishing mysteries, so, by accepting the plain evidence on the miraculous raisings, we reach conclusions of an opposite kind. It is very remarkable how in the two sets of cases the small details of evidence point in contrary directions.

There are several allusions in the New Testament to the miracle of raising the dead, but only five of these are given with any detail, three of these being worked by Christ and two by His disciples. Now, two out of the former group and one out of the latter contain the unconscious suggestion that the person was not dead. Let us begin with the instance from the second group. It is the case of Eutychus who, falling down from the third loft, was taken up dead. On this occasion we are told that St. Paul went down and fell on him and embracing him said : " Trouble not yourselves, for his life is in him." These words, no doubt, simply mean what they say. Eutychus was stunned by his fall but not killed. Everybody thought he was dead, but the heightened sympathetic instinct of St. Paul could detect the glimmer of life surviving in him and could,

through Divine grace, bring it back again and so restore the boy once more. This was a miracle, but it was a miracle of the same kind as those which St. Paul wrought at other times when, by the same vitality of the Holy Spirit working, through him, he restored the sick to health. St. Paul's words on this occasion seem so plain that one is tempted to wonder whether, after all, the writer of the Acts did not himself understand the truth. If however he did, why did he so definitely say that Eutychus was dead (*νεκρός*)? Being himself a physician he generally uses medical terms with some exactness, and one would not expect him to use the definite term here employed if he did not mean it. St. Mark, in describing the cure wrought immediately after the Transfiguration on a boy possessed by a devil, says that the sufferer became "as one dead," using the same term as the one employed by St. Luke in this passage of the Acts (*νεκρός*). St. Luke is not likely to have been less exact than St. Mark in his use of such a word.

Probably, then, St. Luke thought Eutychus was actually dead before he was revived by St. Paul. In such a scene of confusion St. Paul's words may easily have been misunderstood.

Perhaps, what he really said was : " His life is still in him," and these words were reported with a trifling omission of the word " still " because St. Luke believed that life had already fled and then had been brought back again by the Apostle. If, however (which seems most likely), St. Luke believed the boy had been only stunned, then the word "*νεκρός* " is used laxly for one apparently dead. And if St. Luke the physician can employ the term so loosely we should expect to find similar terms used with a similar laxity elsewhere. Of which more anon. We now pass on to the two miracles of our Lord which have to be considered. The first of these is the raising of Jairus' daughter. The accounts of this are perfectly simple. According to all three Synoptists our Lord's words on entering the room were : " She is not dead but sleepeth." When He said this they tell us that those who were present laughed Him to scorn ; and St. Luke, with a physician's exactness, gives the reason " knowing that she was dead." Nothing could be clearer than this incident. The girl was in a state of coma ; and when our Lord said, " She is not dead but sleepeth," He meant exactly what He said. Nobody, however,

believed Him, and the Evangelists themselves did not understand the true meaning of His words. They obviously assumed that the girl was dead, and St. Luke actually says that this was the case. For he says that those present knew she was dead ; and, if he had thought that they were mistaken, he surely would have said rather, that they supposed it. He adds this particular detail because, being a doctor, he is interested in the medical fact (for so he assumes) of her death. Thus we get a very instructive result which shows the wonderful trustworthiness of the Gospel writers. While themselves believing that the girl was actually dead, yet so faithful are they in their record that they quote the actual words of Christ which definitely state that she was not.

The other miracle is the raising of Lazarus, and here we find the same principle at work. The writer is obviously quite certain that Lazarus was dead and yet he gives certain subtle indications which point the other way. He tells us that our Lord, on hearing that Lazarus was sick, answers : " This sickness is not unto death," etc. The natural and simple meaning of these words is unmistakable. The sickness is not a fatal one and Lazarus is not



going to die. But Christ means to go and heal him soon, and thus will show forth His glory. By His supernatural knowledge our Lord can at that distance perfectly gauge the condition of Lazarus, and He knows there is no cause for anxiety. Accordingly He waits two days continuing the work on which He is engaged. Then by His supernatural powers He knows that something has happened and that Lazarus has fallen into a state of coma. Accordingly He hastens to the spot to save him from suffering through a disastrous mistake. The strange words beginning: "Are there not twelve hours in the day" suggest the urgency of the need. If the coma should end before He arrives it might be too late. The disciples, however, do not understand the reason of His haste, He must therefore explain to them as well as He can. Consequently we are told that, having said these words, "After this He saith unto them: Lazarus our friend sleepeth, but I go that I may raise him from sleep." It is quite true that the word sleepeth (*κεκοίμηται*) is one which afterwards came to be commonly used by Christians for death, when the resurrection of Christ had taken away death's sting; but it is equally plain

that this was not the sense in which our Lord's disciples understood it on the present occasion. Moreover, the word for "arouse him from sleep" is one which is nowhere used to describe either Christ's Resurrection or the final raising of the dead. It might, of course, have been used in this latter sense by our Lord, and would, in that sense, certainly be in keeping with that tenderness of imagination which He loved to employ. But what if our Lord used this language on the present occasion for another reason? He wanted to suggest to His disciples that Lazarus was in a state of trance, and therefore He avoided using any words which definitely implied that Lazarus was dead. He spoke what was literal fact when He said He was going to wake Lazarus from a kind of sleep. But the disciples could not understand Him. They did not know that such a trance-state was possible. Hence their reply: "Lord, if he sleepeth he will do well." It was thus impossible for our Lord to convey to them the literal scientific fact. He was therefore obliged to go as near to it as He could, hence He was now compelled to speak of Lazarus' condition by the name of death. It is often the great difficulty of a teacher that his pupils are

incapable at present of receiving the undiluted facts he would suggest. He is obliged for the time being to tolerate, and even encourage, misconceptions if he cannot without them convey the essential part of his teaching. Thus our Lord said, "Lazarus is dead," because, although this was not a scientific truth, yet it was the statement nearest the truth that His disciples could grasp.

Now, such a manner of dealing with His disciples is precisely what we find in other parts of our Lord's work. Occasionally we find teaching concerning the eternal nature of God which may almost seem crudely anthropomorphic. Such teaching, when it was given, was the only form in which the truth of God's loving Providence could be conveyed to the hearer's mind. But Christ Himself hints that there are transcendent mysteries which can be revealed only, and then with difficulty, to a few. Perhaps, however, the most striking instance of such condescension to human weakness is afforded by the Resurrection Appearances which have been already discussed. An attempt has been made to show that our Lord, when He rose again, was trying to wean the disciples' minds from their lower earthly

conceptions of this present state. He was trying to show them that He has passed beyond the limitations of natural flesh and blood. Yet, in spite of this, when they could not believe that He was risen He appeared before them to convince them ; and, though He told Thomas it was better to believe without the evidence of sight, yet He told him to touch the wounds in His Hands and Side and He had eight days before this appeared to the other disciples and eaten before them and told them to touch Him, adding the words : “ A spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have.” It was best that they should have a spiritual view of His Resurrection state ; yet it was better that they should have a gross materialistic view of it than that they should wholly disbelieve it. Hence He condescended to the level of their capacity and even, for a time, encouraged a faulty conception of His state if only somehow He could convey to them the truth that He was risen.

It is very remarkable if the principle underlying His dealings with the disciples after He rose again from the dead was precisely the same as that which guided Him when He said to them with some reluctance, “ Lazarus is dead.”

It was suggested above as just possible that St. Luke, in recounting the accident to Eutychus, did not believe him to have been really killed, but used the word "dead" (*νεκρός*) loosely, since no better term could be found. If this were so, it would illustrate our Lord's words on the present occasion when He said that Lazarus was dead, and would help to show how the limits of human language compelled Him to use a phrase which, though not scientifically accurate, came nearer than any other to the actual truth. But probably this passage in the Acts will not afford us any such aid; for probably St. Luke, when he says that Eutychus was taken up dead, believes that to have been the literal truth.

There is, however, in our Lord's language a point that should be noticed. It is the tense He uses. Having just above used the perfect when He said that Lazarus was sleeping, He now uses the aorist when He says that Lazarus is dead. Now, it will be found that the Fourth Evangelist discriminates more carefully than the Synoptists between the two tenses; and when he employs one or the other of them it is generally to give the proper shade of meaning which the tense would bear in classical Greek.

Therefore we may take it that the aorist in this passage is used for some special reason. It represents some shade of meaning expressed by the original words of Christ. Or if, as is possible, our Lord actually spoke in Greek, it may be that the writer has set down the very word employed.

That it is not fanciful to suppose some definite shade of meaning to have been intended by this change of tense from the perfect of "Lazarus sleepeth" to the aorist of "Lazarus is dead" is suggested by the delicate contrast of these two tenses later on in the same chapter. When Christ came to Bethany He was greeted by Martha and Mary in almost the same terms, which were no doubt an echo of the words which the two sisters had been repeating to one another during the last four days: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died." Apart, however, from the fact that Martha adds more words to this greeting, there is (according to good manuscript authority) another striking difference. While Mary uses the aorist, Martha uses the pluperfect. And the difference between the two greetings is one of the most exquisite and delicate touches in the New Testament. Martha declares that her



brother is absolutely dead. She is so convinced of the fact that she believes his body has already gone to corruption, as she showed by her words when they come to the tomb. She uses the pluperfect tense because she believes that his death is absolute and complete ; after which she hints that our Lord can even now exercise His power and rob the grave of its prey. Mary, on the other hand, with that superior delicacy which we find elsewhere in her character, does not presume to make any such suggestion. With the instinct of love she leaves it in Christ's Hands, knowing that He will do what is right. And yet all the time she is convinced that He will raise her brother up again, and therefore she cannot regard the death as absolute and complete. She believes, of course, that Lazarus is dead ; but she does not look upon this death as final, and she cannot therefore use the uncompromising phrase which had fallen from her sister's lips. She tones the language down by using another tense ; and that is the only hint her words convey of the hope that burns within her heart.

This episode seems to throw some light upon our Lord's own language, when He said :

“Lazarus sleepeth.” He used the perfect tense, because there was no need to lessen the force of a word which in itself was too weak rather than too strong. But when He used the words “Lazarus is dead,” He put the verb in the aorist tense because it was in itself too strong and needed softening as much as possible. Or, if He spoke in Aramaic, then in some other way He suggested this subtle shade of meaning which is here represented by the change of tense. The Evangelist himself does not grasp the full meaning of what he records; but, having been present, he faithfully sets down what he heard. Thus, although it would not do to build a whole theory on such a slight foundation, yet one can say that if Lazarus was not dead, but in a state of trance, such a subtle point of language as this falls naturally into its place. And perhaps the words which immediately follow show almost a desire in our Lord to turn the subject, as we find Him doing on other occasions. His disciples cannot understand Him, and it is useless to explain, and so, while tolerating an error which cannot be helped, He turns their thought into other directions.

It is of course quite true that the same

tense of the same verb is used at the raising of Jairus' daughter when Christ said : " She is not dead but sleepeth." There He is denying death, but not denying a trance, and thus " death " is the only meaning the word in that place can bear. But this miracle is recorded only by the Synoptists, who are not so careful in their use of tenses and often use the aorist with the sense of the perfect. In fact St. Luke, in recounting this miracle, uses both tenses without any distinction. Therefore in the accounts of this miracle a stronger phrase might very well have been modified by the habitual usage of the writers. That term of phrase which they represent by an aorist would perhaps, had the Fourth Evangelist been the writer, have been rendered by the perfect. And therefore the argument from the tense in the 11th Chapter of St. John still has a value. It may well be that the Fourth Evangelist often expresses shades of meaning in our Lord's utterances such as would escape the literary style of the Synoptists.

There is, in the account of the Raising of Lazarus, a further detail which has sometimes caused surprise. The Evangelist lays great emphasis on a strange mental agony which

Christ displayed. In recording what took place he gives the simple fact, but this fact has caused perplexity to many. Our Lord was just about to perform a miracle; and yet His mind is oppressed by some mysterious weight. It may be, of course, that the mere thought of death filled Him with such grief and agony; for death shows the weakness of our mortal state and is a kind of outrage upon humanity. This may be a sufficient explanation; but what if the true reason lies yet deeper? What if our Lord, as He went to rescue His friend from a most hideous fate, could not but think with intolerable agony of others in a similar plight from which He could not go and rescue them? The weight of human anguish weighed always heavy on the heart of Christ, and He wept over the city of Jerusalem as He foretold its impending doom. His miraculous knowledge brought Him much sorrow. Perhaps as He groaned in spirit and wept at the grave of Lazarus, it was for a reason which those around Him could not know.

A further argument is worth considering. Though the early Church possessed great miraculous powers, yet there were certain miracles of Christ which seem never to have

been repeated by His followers. The miracles which are recorded in the Acts are chiefly miracles of healing. Other wonderful events such as the liberation of St. Peter from prison, or the bursting open of the prison doors where St. Paul and Silas were immured, appear to have been the work not of the disciples themselves but of discarnate spirits. Apparently the early Church had no power of working nature-miracles. There is nothing like the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, or the turning of water into wine, or the stilling of the tempest. The miraculous powers of the Church apparently reached to a certain point but not beyond it. Now, the raising of the dead would be something very much like a nature miracle, if the life in the resuscitated body really had been extinct. Therefore the fact that St. Peter performed a miracle of raising and yet does not seem ever to have performed any other nature miracle itself suggests that this miracle was not exactly what it appeared to be—in other words, that Dorcas was not really dead but in a trance.

Rationalism is almost the absurdest folly the mind of man has ever devised; and the *last* thing the present writer desires is to

explain away the miraculous element of Christianity. There are laws which the little plummet of natural science has not yet fathomed. The present purpose is not to discredit the supernatural but exactly the reverse. It is to show the absolute faithfulness of the New Testament narratives. So faithful are they that the writers record minute details the true significance of which they themselves do not always grasp. Thus there are details which tend to suggest (what is in itself most likely) that those who are spoken of as raised from the dead were actually rescued from a state of coma. With equally unconscious faithfulness, on the other hand, they record apparently conflicting details of the Resurrection Appearances which yet, being put together, cohere in an ordered scheme and all help to make more luminously clear the vast interval that separates Christ's Risen Body from all merely natural and material conditions.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE MYSTICAL BODY AND THE EUCHARISTIC BODY OF CHRIST

CHRIST is now living in a spiritual body. And the two chief sacraments of the Catholic Church have reference to this fact. For in both of them the word "Body" has a fundamental place. Baptism makes us members of Christ's Mystical Body, and the Eucharist makes us partakers of His Body and Blood. Thus to understand these two great mysteries in any degree we must try to grasp the sense or senses in which the word "Body" is here employed. What is the Mystical Body of Christ into which we are incorporated? And what is that Body and Blood which we receive?

We must begin by trying to define the word "Body" when taken in its general sense. What for instance do I mean when I speak of a certain material organism as my body? I

mean that it is mine in a sense that the rest of the material universe is not. I may possess certain things which I call my property—money, books, and a home ; and these in some sense are mine ; and yet they are not so completely mine as that which I call my material body. This body of mine is the necessary instrument in which and through which I work and think and feel. It is the instrument by which I distinguish myself from the world. For this body is in some sense me, and the world is not me. Thus my body marks me off and separates me from the rest of the material universe, and makes me an individual.

This is, roughly speaking, what I mean by “ body ” when I apply this word to my material organism. And so, if I employ the same term to describe other and immaterial organisms which are also mine, the fundamental meaning must be the same. If there exists that which, for want of a better term, we have called the “ soul-body,” and if St. Macarius was justified in saying that the soul itself is a kind of body, it must be because the soul and this vesture which clothes it possess, in other regions than these, this individualizing quality. They, on other planes of life, distinguish the individual from his

surroundings. As the material body marks off the individual from his material surroundings so do these subtler bodies mark him off from the subtler surroundings of different stages in the other world.

So must it be with the spiritual body ; and so with the glorified Body of the Ascended Christ. This it is that, on the highest spiritual plane which we call heaven, marks off the human Soul of Christ from all the host of heaven ; from every individual and from that common element of eternal Love which is the Life of all. Without His Spiritual Body Christ would not (so far as we can see) possess that which we mean by an individual existence. He would not distinguish Himself from other beings but would transcend all such distinction.

Such an existence, transcending all distinction, is the Life of the Triune indivisible Godhead. God is not one being amongst all the others in the world ; the absolute and passionless Unity of the Godhead is such that there is no longer any distinction between " me and thee," but one incomprehensible Life, as light, being colourless, transcends all colours. Hence it is that the Church describes His Nature by the word " infinite." I am a finite being because I

cannot be myself in this finite world which is necessary to me without distinguishing myself from you and all the other beings around me. And therefore personality, as we know it, is in its essence finite. But the simple Being of God is above all these limitations so that in heaven God is All and in all. He is there the Universal Element which is heaven itself.

Now, St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that the human Soul of Christ does not comprehend the Divine Word with which it is united in one personal being. From this it is plain that, while the Word or the Godhead is infinite, Christ's human Soul is finite. And this means that Christ's human Soul, being perfectly and absolutely human, belongs to a phase or state of existence at which these distinctions are necessary. Christ, in His Human Soul distinguishes Himself from all the other souls and loves them not merely as being the universal element in which they live but also as being one amongst them. This is the amazing paradox of the Divine Nature that God, on the one side, possesses a finite life amongst them.

Now, it is for the sake of this finitude that Christ possesses a Body. By means of His Body He remains an individual for ever distinct

from each one of us. And thus the doctrine of the Spiritual Body safeguards the existence of human personality.

Having thus obtained some kind of rough conception as to what we mean when we speak of the Spiritual Body, let us see what light this conception throws on the sacrament of Baptism.

Now, the first thing to be noticed here is that, when St. Paul speaks of the Church as Christ's Body, he adds the epithet "mystical." The Church of Christ is not simply His Spiritual Body but His Mystical Body. What is the meaning of this epithet? Perhaps we shall understand its meaning best if we consider the metaphor elsewhere used in the New Testament, where the union of Christ and His Church is compared with the mystery of wedlock. As the twain are one flesh without any loss of individual character, so Christ and His Church are one mystical Body yet without any loss of separate personality. So it is that St. Paul says that we are "His body of His flesh and of His bones," alluding, perhaps, to the passage in Genesis where Eve is said to have been made from the bone of Adam. Even so our life is taken from Christ, and yet we keep

our separate personalities. Even so do we depend for our existence on Him whose heavenly Body, now containing the flesh and bones of His earthly body, changed into a spiritual state of being.

And as it is His spiritual Body with which we are united, so is it in our spiritual bodies that this sacramental union has its ultimate place. Our spiritual bodies are grafted into His. But because these spiritual bodies of ours are at present undeveloped, and because the spiritual body exists as a germ in the natural body, therefore it is through the natural body that the sacramental union takes place. It is the natural body that is baptized, and, in this act, an influence passes through the intermediate bodily wrappings (so to call them) reaching to that spiritual body which exists but as a germ and incorporating this into the mystical Body of Christ. And this act is real, though useless unless followed by proper training and effort, just as the accident of our birth really gives us our nationality which yet is useless to us unless we are so trained as to make use of its privileges.

Thus our spiritual bodies, existing now in the germ, are made members of Christ, and



when, in another life, these are fully developed, then our membership will be made perfect.

It is not a *mere metaphor* to speak of the Church as Christ's Mystical Body. For a man's body is that through which he feels. And Christ, by the power of sympathy, feels all the joys and all the sorrows, all the attainments and all the imperfections, of His members as if they were His own. He feels in us, and through us. This is what He teaches Himself in the well-known passage of St. Matthew, Chapter xxv. And this is what St. Paul appears to imply when he talks of filling up that which is lacking of the sufferings of Christ. If the sympathy of Christ is perfect, this must be the case ; and thus it is a literal fact that the Church is, in a true sense, His Body.

On the other hand, this body is spoken of as mystical, because it is not an individual but is composed of many individuals. A body, in the ordinary sense of the word, is that which possesses one's self. And such is the Spiritual Body in which Christ ascended into Heaven and reigns there now. But that Spiritual Body is the head of the Mystical Body in which each self, while throbbing in perfect sympathy with the feelings of the rest, must remain eternally distinct.

There is a difficult question which must be faced. It concerns the home of the perfected spiritual body. Christ ascended up into the air when the great forty days were completed ; and this would seem to suggest that His Spiritual Body occupies some place beyond the sky. Are we to take this conception literally ? Is His Spiritual Body anywhere in space, or are we to understand His ascent into the sky as an outward token of some spiritual mystery beyond the reach of the senses ? Probably the second answer is the right one. Christ's Spiritual Body is not in space, but has passed beyond all spatial limitations. As energy, vibrating in a certain way, produces matter, which disappears as the vibrations increase, so life, vibrating in its intensest form, reaches a point where space itself disappears. The vibrations are now of a different kind and beyond all limits of dimensions. So it is that Suso in a wonderful vision seemed to perceive the pulsations of another world ; and yet he tells us that this vibrating presence, which he felt rising and sinking through his soul in succeeding waves of motion, did not move as anything moves in space, but rather in another manner which no words could express. Thus, perhaps it is that in the spiritual body all lower

movements are transmuted and utterly transcend the category of space.

Hence it is that spatial distance does not affect the spiritual body ; and hence that Christ is present where two or three are gathered together in His Name. And hence, though the members of Christ's Church are scattered abroad over the face of the earth, yet their sacramental union brought about by Baptism is not affected.

And the life of Christ's Spiritual Body is the Holy Ghost, just as our animal vitality is the life of our natural bodies. And, as the animal magnetism streams forth from the natural body and has an intangible influence outside of it, so does the Holy Ghost, which Christ breathed into His Church and then sent down in fullest measure at Pentecost, stream from His Spiritual Body and work as a vitalising Principle in the spiritual bodies of His members. And the work of the Holy Ghost is also felt outside the Church, and this influence outside the Church is real because the true light which is Christ "lighteth every man that cometh into the world." But the purpose of the Church is to gather together all these scattered workings and to make them co-ordinate in one organic body.

Now, the Spiritual Body of Christ is that

which makes Him one individual over against the rest of the human race. And the Mystical Body of Christ is the unity in which His Spiritual Body and the spiritual bodies of His members are joined together. What then of those who have not been baptized? Do not they in any sense belong to His Mystical Body and does not He in any sense feel in them and through them? If so then His sympathy is limited and He cares only for a few. And that we cannot believe. Is there then a kind of invisible Church besides the visible company of the baptized? Let us see if the present theory leaves room for some such conception.

The Eternal Word, or Deity, which is the *root* and ground of the Kingdom of Heaven is an infinite and incomprehensible spiritual life above all limitations which mark off one individual being from another. The full and perfect life of the glorified Redeemer thus possesses these two aspects of being, on the one side the incomprehensible Word, on the other the embodied individuality. And in the incomprehensible Word is contained the ultimate life of all men; in it all are grounded and therein have their root. And because this Eternal Word is an unceasing thirst of love

whose very perfection is a kind of imperfection and unrest, unsatisfied until men be brought to the birth and perfected, therefore its absolute unity is rich with the promise of an overflowing and manifold diversity, is rich with all the ultimate life which here on earth takes form under the limited condition of the individual spirits. And therefore this ultimate unity is from one point of view that invisible Church which is called the Kingdom of Heaven. God's kingdom is Himself and in His heart there eternally exists as an unchanging ideal that invisible company of the perfected human race which finds some sort of embodiment in every form of human society that is impelled by a lofty purpose. And to embody this invisible kingdom is the one purpose of the Church which by its sacramental ordinance of baptism concentrates into its most definite form the deepest and most enduring aspiration of mankind.

Let us now consider the Holy Eucharist. In this sacrament also we find the word "Body." In what sense is the term used? The words "Body" and "Blood" go together and express one conception. According to the ancient Jewish belief "the blood is the life thereof." And therefore the Body and Blood of Christ

would mean His living Body. And since the Body in which Christ ascended into heaven is a spiritual one, therefore it is His living Spiritual Body that is present in the Sacrament. It is not His natural Body since that has been utterly transmuted. It is quite true that the Eucharist is sometimes spoken of by ancient writers as His flesh, and the familiar passage in the sixth chapter of St. John appears to allude to it by this title ; still the fact remains unaltered. The case is exactly parallel to the passage already quoted where St. Paul, speaking of Christ's union with His Church, says that we are of His flesh and of His bones. The natural Body of Christ, which moved upon this earth as flesh and blood and bones, has now been transformed into the Spiritual Body containing all the individual life which was manifested under these lower conditions. Therefore, in being united to His Spiritual Body, the Christian is united to the transmuted spiritual Essence of His flesh and bones ; and therefore also, in receiving the Eucharist, he receives the Spiritual Essence of that same living flesh. The main purpose of the Eucharist is to convey the living Spiritual Body of Christ into the recipient. And it is not the Mystical Body that is received



but the actual and literal Body of Christ. The Church is united in this actual literal Body and being joined with It forms the Mystical Body of which Christ is the Head. The members of the Church, when they receive the Eucharist, receive into themselves that living Spiritual Body which is the vehicle of Christ's individual Personality.

Now, it has been suggested that the Spiritual Body of Christ is beyond all spatial limits. It is not in space at all or rather It is everywhere in space. How then can we say that It is especially present in the bread and wine? Certainly there is a sense in which It is possessed by the Eucharistic Elements and by nothing else. And yet, on the other hand, there is no place in the world where Christ cannot be found. How can this be? In a region of quality not quantity. Perhaps Bergson's conception of an animal body may help us. According to him our perceptions of all things are outside of our own organism and in the things themselves. When I perceive a rose, or a house, or a mountain, my conception is not (as used to be supposed) either in the grey matter of my brain, or in some non-spatial region. It is in space, but outside of my brain, and iis in the

rose, in the house, or in the mountain itself. My sensations (without which the perception would not be mine) are in my brain and nervous system ; the actual perception itself is outside of these in the external world. There is, in fact, a current of life passing from the world around me through my organs of sense by the afferent nerves to the brain and thence returning through the same channels by the efferent nerves to the outer world once more. Or rather there are two currents of life, one which enters my brain by the organs of sense and the other which passes through them from my brain ; and where these two currents interpenetrate in the external world, there my perceptions arise. And these two currents are two mutual aspects or functions of an underlying reality which is my conscious life.

Now, from this it becomes quite plain that I am somehow in the external world. It is as it were one side or aspect of my body. Otherwise the perceptions in it would not be my perceptions. Nevertheless I mean something plain and definite when I speak of this organism through which I work as my body. It belongs to me in a special manner, and, though there is a sense in which my life and personality interpenetrate

the whole external world, yet there is a sense in which they dwell solely within my body. In the same way, or in a more wonderful manner, Christ is actually present to all men and in them all and yet vouchsafes a special kind of presence in the Eucharistic elements. In some way the Bread and Wine are vehicles in which His living Spiritual Body dwells.

Can we get any nearer the truth than this? Perhaps another wonderful conception of Bergson's may help us. According to him the entire development of life consists in the overcoming of a barrier raised, as it were, by the nature of matter. The stream of life presses against the intractable opposition of the material world and frets out a channel now on this side and now on that through which it can pass on. All living organisms with their nervous systems are ducts of these branching channels, and thus my body and brain is as it were a point where the material barrier has been overcome and made in some degree amenable to the purposes of life. This principle holds good wherever life exists upon this earth. And a striking instance of it is to be found in the very nature of our senses. The life within me, as it strives to expand, cannot but seek to exercise

a faculty of perception. Were this to work unhindered I should hear and see, even as I can feel, with every part of my body. And in fact cases have been recorded of those who, rising superior to the natural body, have had some psychic vision of things above the material plane, and, in this vision, have been conscious that they could see with the whole of that superior body through which they now were working, and that their power of sight was not limited to the eyes. Perhaps some such experience may explain the grotesque imagery in the Apocalypse of the creatures full of eyes. The writer was perhaps trying to express some experience of his own.

It would seem then that the faculty of sight permeates the whole of that intermediate body through which such psychic vision takes place. And if so, it is literally true that our natural body blinds us with its material nature. This obstacle, however, is overcome by the eyes with their system of nerves. Through these a couple of apertures, as it were, are pierced and thus the power of vision is able to act. Matter has become transparent ; a window has been made in the prison-house of the soul. The power of vision is concealed within my natural body ;

it is set free through my eyes. and thus, in a special sense, it is in them. So it is with the Presence of Christ; He is in all things, concealed by the veil of the material world. In the consecrated elements the veil becomes transparent and, though no change takes place in Him and He is not any more than previously limited by material conditions, yet in a special sense He now is present and we can look through this transparent point into the eyes of God. The opposition of matter has at this one point been pierced and overcome; and, though Christ does not of course employ the Eucharistic Elements as the organ of His consciousness, yet He employs them as a means by which we meet with Him. His omnipresent Spiritual Body acts in a special manner through the Bread and Wine.

Such is the change which takes place through the consecration of the Elements. But if such a change takes place, why is it not visibly manifest? Why is it that nothing happens, like the bursting of the leaf which shows the principle of life at work within the material particles of the tree? The change which takes place at the consecration of the Eucharist does not affect the material stuff composing the

bread and wine ; it works in that rarer and subtler medium which is concealed behind or within them. It has been already suggested that within the natural body of each man there is a finer integument or "soul-body" which may itself consist of several wrappings enclosing one another and finally containing the germ of the spiritual body. If this is so, each one of these finer wrappings must correspond to some definite plane of existence ; and, as the material body is organized out of the material world, so would each one of these wrappings be organized out of a world with a nature like its own. And if so, then each particle of matter is interpenetrated by these other and more subtle essences which, in their turn, enshrine and conceal the invisible world of spirit. And presumably it is in these essences that the change takes place at the consecration of the Eucharist. They become responsive to the spiritual mystery behind them, and so allow its influence to penetrate their texture, and thus, without any loss of their own characteristics, they become saturated with that mystic Presence, and so they contain the living Body of Christ. And thus it is that, while the outward material Elements are consumed by our material bodies,



the intermediate essences, passing into the "soul-body" convey through it to the spiritual body within us, the living spiritual Body of Christ.

Thus the doctrine of the two chief Sacraments is bound up with the doctrine of the Spiritual Body. And there is no cause for surprise that, where the Resurrection state has been regarded in a materialistic way, the result of such a conception has shown itself in a materialized doctrine of the Sacraments. This has been the tendency in the Roman Church. Romanist theologians define the Spiritual Body in such a way as to destroy its spiritual character. It is for them practically a material or natural body resuscitated. And hence their conception of a material hell burning with material fire. Corresponding to such teaching we naturally find a mechanical conception of baptism. The tendency is to regard baptismal Regeneration as something that works in the natural body of the baptized person independently of his spiritual activity. Probably there is some truth in such a conception but when unduly emphasized it results in a mechanical or at any rate a materialistic theory. The tendency is to regard the natural body rather than the

spiritual body as the seat of baptismal Regeneration.

This materialistic tendency is plainest in the Roman doctrine of the Eucharist. The definitions of the Roman Church upon this subject imply the conception of a natural body rather than a spiritual one. According to St. Thomas Aquinas the substance of the bread and wine is destroyed through consecration and replaced by that of Christ's Body and Blood, and the reason he gives for this view is that no two substances can be in the same place at the same time. Therefore, he says, if the substance of Christ's Body and Blood are there the substance of the bread and wine can be there no longer. Now, it does not need to be pointed out that this implies a materialistic notion. Two pieces of matter cannot be at the same time in the same place, but, if the substance of Christ's Body and Blood is spiritual, it is bound by no such limitation. It is, in fact, omnipresent, though hidden except when the act of consecration makes the subtler texture which is shrouded by the elements, transparent to reveal it. The same material conception underlies the Romanist theory as to the nature of the Eucharistic sacrifice. It is taught by at any

rate some Roman theologians that a sacrifice must involve the destruction of the thing sacrificed. Hence it is the Body and Blood of Christ that are destroyed and made subject to change at each Eucharist. And hence the theory (condemned by the Anglican Reformers) that, while Christ's Death cancels original sin, actual transgressions are done away by the separate offerings of the Eucharist. In each celebration of the Holy Mysteries Christ actually dies afresh. That is to say the Body in which He is present on the Altar is a natural and not a spiritual one. It is significant that defective theories on the nature of the sacraments are exactly parallel to defective theories on the Resurrection body. And the loss involved has been very great. For a revolt against such mechanical theories of the Eucharist on the part of those who still retained a crude materialistic conception of the Risen Body resulted in a weakening of the sacramental conception and almost in its total loss. For if the Risen Body of Christ is of a material kind, and if a material conception of His Eucharistic Presence is rejected, then it follows that the substance of His Body and Blood is not present on the Altar. And, if this is so, then the Elements become

mere tokens of a past event and signs of something that is not here. And this conception tends to obscure the whole value and dignity of material symbols, and the external vulgarization of modern life, in nearly every department of its activity, may be partly traced to this cause. Where men believe that the living Spiritual Body of Christ is in the simple Eucharistic Elements of bread and wine, they are bound to look upon matter as something mysterious and capable of itself becoming sacred.

THE END



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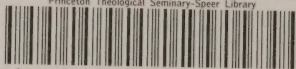


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